

# St Thomas of Canterbury, Billingham

## Youth Report 2016

Good Morning/Evening

Thank you Fr for the opportunity to talk to you all about the youth involvement within our parish. Last July I led a youth pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi for the Holy Year, overall I would say that it was very successful. We travelled on Sunday morning to Rome, once we got there we had Mass and went out to eat. On the Monday we visited the English College Villa who made us all welcome. On Tuesday we walked down to Castle San Angelo to start the walk of mercy heading up towards St Peters Basilica reciting prayers and psalms, upon entering the Basilica we were made to feel somewhat famous entering the Holy Door and walking as a group on our own down the Middle of the Basilica whilst pilgrims and visitors took pictures of our procession to the Tomb of St Peter, were we recited the Apostles creed, this was an amazing prayerful experience for us all. In the afternoon we visited the Roman Forums and the Basilicas of Mary Major and John Lateran and participated in the Holy Steps. On the third day we travelled to Assisi where we visited the Basilicas of St Mary of the Angels, St Francis and St Claire. After being in 40 degree heat most of the days as you could imagine the landing at Newcastle on Thursday was a bit nippy. I would just like to thank the parish for their support and prayers. I would also like to say how proud I was of the youth during our pilgrimage, they were prayerful and conducted themselves accordingly, we all had a good time and it was a privilege to lead such a great group. I am planning another Youth Pilgrimage for 2017, it is the intention to stay a bit longer than we did in July so we can soak see more of Assisi and do other things in Rome such as Excavations at St Peter's the Catacombs and the Sistine chapel as well as in Assisi San Damiano and the hermitage and the Cathedral.

Moving onto the John Paul 2 award, I am pleased to let you all know that two of our servers Ben and Chris completed successfully their Papal Cross award, this involved parish involvement and also social awareness. For this they served on the altar and took communion to the sick, now they have the honour of receiving there award next March from the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Mennini. For this year we held a meeting where I spoke to the youth about the award and what they can do to gain this, they were very keen to participate and we have four signed up so far for the Gold award. So I wish them luck during this year, not that they need it mind.

I am also pleased to announce that our youth are involved in the Young Christian Workers in which I had the pleasure to welcome the National President, Treasure and Chaplin to the meeting, the meeting went well and we have now set up the group with three at the moment but of course there is always room for anyone who wishes to join. This is a another great way in which the John Paul candidates can gain the hours for their social awareness side of the award and also it is a chance to reflect on our society and hopefully make a good contribution to our community. I have been down to the YCW headquarters on the 5<sup>th</sup> November for the day as the YCW hosted a training session for chaplains it was a great opportunity for me to gain knowledge, experiences, good practice and also learning more about the spirituality of the YCW for me to return to guide the group more.

Moving onto the altar servers, on the 15<sup>th</sup> October, a coach full of parishioners, servers, families and 7 from Norton parish attended the Annual Diocesan Mass at St Mary's Cathedral in which the Bishop was principal celebrant, the Mass was also attended by the National President and Secretary of the Guild. The Mass was moving with Fr Donnelly's homily on service, our servers also got the chance to participate fully within the Mass in which we had the following jobs allocated: Incense boat, acolyte, cross bearer as well as First Reading the psalm and offertory procession not that I had anything to do with this, of course. I would like to thank once again Fr Butters and the parishioners who support the server's through various activities.

I can confirm that the money we raise during the course of the year pays for the bus up to the cathedral and a meal in which servers can socialise and also we can thank parishioners who have helped support us. Each year at Christmas the servers donate money to CAFOD, this year we have donated £118 for the following necessities:

- A net that protects
- A water tap
- Teaching someone to read
- A Goat
- Supplies for a healthy mum and baby
- And water for a family.

Lastly, encouraged by the great success of the Flame 2 in 2015 and organised by the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation. The parish are attending Flame 2017 held at the SSE Arena in Wembley. Flame has now become an important part of the Catholic Calendar and mission in England and Wales. It is a unique opportunity for young Catholics to experience a joyful and missionary Church. In that setting, they experience Christ's presence through times of prayerful worship and inspiring speakers, as well as through music and much true enthusiasm. In 2015 at Flame 2, Cardinal Tagle, recognized how important our young people are to the mission of the Church, and encouraged them with these words: "My dear young people of England and Wales, be the living signs in our world of God's mercy. Be living signs of the joy of the Gospel of mercy. Recall in your lives how God has been merciful to you. Proclaim God's mercy and the joy that has come to you, because God has been merciful to you." The theme for Flame 2017 is "10,000 Reasons." This is the title of a song by Matt Redman, who will be leading the music. The Arena, to capacity, seats 10,000 people. We know that our ministry with young people helps us to see their God-given gifts and talents. So the theme both encourages us to see the unique gifts of every person, and for everyone to go forth from the Arena at the end of the day with renewed faith, fresh "reasons" to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. This was a fantastic experience in 2015 and we have a coach capacity of 57 for the next Flame, so we invite all the youth and anyone who wants to join with us to this special event. The cost of the trip is FREE and this includes the coach and ticket into the arena. If you would like to go please sign-up on the form at the back of church.

Thank you once again in listening to the youth activities within our parish, as you can see a lot does go on and please keep the youth in your prayers.

With best wishes, Marc Besford