



A letter from the Diocesan Youth Office on National Youth Sunday 2011

As it's 'National Youth Sunday', I thought I would take this opportunity to look back over last year and let you know about some things planned for the future.

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly World Youth Day in Madrid last August. 55 came on the coach with many of them starting at Walsingham to achieve visiting three national shrines in three days (Walsingham, Lourdes and Zaragoza). Another 7 people made their own way to Madrid and met up with us for the vigil and final Mass with Pope Benedict. It was very much a true 'pilgrimage' with our fair share of challenges (mainly due to the heat and Spanish organisation - or lack of it!) but overall most of the group had an amazing time, and for some it was genuinely life changing. Two months on, after the excitement, one young person wrote:

It opened up my eyes to a whole new ray of light, made me feel complete peace and serenity for the entirety of the pilgrimage and enabled me to understand faith with an indestructible hope for life and a new powerful admiration for faith, filled with my complete love... It gave me the ability to start loving myself, for that I can hold no greater appreciation for everyone involved in my experience including, of course God... One of, if not the most memorable and cherished moments of my life. I have never had so much faith.

Becca, Peterborough

Comments like this are so encouraging, and good to remember as we work out how best to respond to Pope Benedict's invitation to join him in Rio for the next World Youth Day in less than two years! More details on that in the new year.

Obviously, the summer was also a time of great sadness with the death of Bishop Michael. Many young people were very close to him especially some of the Youth Council, but out of this has come a determination to keep youth ministry alive and active - something Bishop Michael would have wanted. We had a good turn out at our Youth Council meeting in September, including some new members, and have begun planning the usual variety of events. This starts with the New Year and Epiphany Candlelight Mass, followed by fireworks, on Saturday January 7th. More details will be sent out shortly. As well as working with the Youth Council, I continue to work with a number of parishes and schools in establishing youth programmes, and running day and weekend retreats. I have also become very involved in Vocations promotion, which amongst other things has resulted in running 'Vocation Days' in schools.

One of the most exciting things coming up in March is 'Flame' - a national event for Catholic young people (Year 10 and above) at Wembley Arena. With high quality speakers, music, and thousands of young people, it promises to be an event to ignite young hearts and souls afresh with the joy of the Gospel message! We are involved in organising Flame along with most other English dioceses and Catholic youth organizations (together known as CYMFed – Catholic Youth Ministry Federation). So far we have sold over 6000 tickets nationally - but not many of these are from East Anglia! So, to encourage people to come, we are organizing subsidised transport from Norwich, Cambridge, Ipswich and Peterborough, plus the first fifty tickets bought through the diocesan website will also be heavily subsidised. Flame would be particularly appropriate for Confirmation groups and those confirmed in the last few years. Adult leaders are also welcome. Please see www.catholiceastanglia.org/youth for more information and get buying your tickets now!

Please keep young people and all those who work with them in you prayers.

Many thanks for all you support,

Hamish MacQueen
Director of Diocesan Youth Service