

St Mark's Chaplaincy Newsletter

October 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our fourth Chaplaincy Newsletter was shared with you in July. School is such a busy place, the summer holidays now seem a long way in the past!

Staff returned to school on Wednesday 1st September and, on that first morning back, gathered for mass in St Michael and St Martin's Church. The main theme running through that mass was 'love'. St Paul reminds us that love is the greatest of all the virtues. As a Catholic school we seek to share the idea of living a life of love. As educators we care for our students and want the best for each and everyone of them. We inspire our students to care for each other and the world around them and to put that love into action.

Although we had to limit the number of family members who could attend, it was also lovely to welcome our new Year 7 students and their families into the school hall for the Year 7 Family Mass on the 14th September. The theme for this mass was: 'Do not be afraid'. The liturgy was enhanced by the beautiful singing of the Year 7 students who had formed a choir and were led by Ms Jackson. We are grateful to Fr Austin for celebrating both of these masses.



Students decorated boats for the mass offering up their hopes and fears for the year ahead.

We have also been able to resume having our regular Thursday break time masses. The Year 8 form groups have been taking it in turn to prepare the masses since September. We are very grateful to the priests who support us by coming into school to celebrate with us. This half-term we would like to thank Fr Austin, Fr Damian and Fr Luigi. Any member of the school community is welcome to attend the Thursday masses - we extend break time on this day. We are really grateful to the students in the Liturgy Choir and those who play the music for their dedicated service. They really do make the masses beautiful.

Our newly formed Chaplaincy Team students will have their commissioning Mass on Thursday, 11th November in the school Chapel. We would like to invite you to accompany them on their journeys as missionary disciples in your prayers. They will introduce themselves in the next Newsletter.

Year 7 Retreats

Together with the RE department and Year 7 Form Tutors, the Chaplaincy Team organised the Year 7 Retreats that took place on the 4th and 11th October. The retreats provide an opportunity for the students to grow closer to God and help the students have a better sense of self. They also support the students in building their relationships with others in their new school community. The retreats are always fun as well as spiritual and this year they were a great success. We are glad the students enjoyed the experience.



Here are some quotes from the students about the Retreat Days.

'Three words to describe it - BEST DAY EVER!'

'I didn't want it to end'

'My favourite part of the day was the reflective activity - we wrote letters to our future selves. We will get these back in Year 11.'

'This day was a chance to get closer with your classmates and with Christ - and it helped me so much.'

<https://rainbowsgb.org/>

The Rainbows Bereavement Support Programme called Spectrum, that was advertised in previous newsletters, has now begun.

The first meeting was on the 30th September. This programme is specifically for students, in our school, who have experienced a significant loss in their lives.

If any families would like more information please do contact me.

School Ministries

Our newly formed Chaplaincy Team students will have their commissioning Mass on Thursday, 11th November in the school Chapel. We would like to invite you to accompany them on their journeys as missionary disciples in your prayers.

Little Amal

An exciting event is happening during Half-Term on 25th October from 2-3pm as Little Amal is visiting Westminster Cathedral on that day. Little Amal is a 3.5m puppet of a 9 year-old refugee (See image below). Little Amal was constructed by the Handspring Puppet Company, which previously made the equine stars of the stage version of War Horse.



She will be welcomed to the Cathedral by Cardinal Vincent. The whole purpose of Little Amal is to teach us more about migrants and refugees. Anyone going is asked to be seated by 1.45pm.

Further information about Little Amal's journey is available at <https://www.walkwithamal.org/>

The Church celebrated the Season of Creation from the 1st of September to the 4th of October. On the 21st and 22nd of September our school assemblies were on Cop 26.

The COP26 climate talks will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to talk about the ways we can tackle climate change. It is taking place on UK soil as it is being held in Glasgow, Scotland. Students learnt that Cop 26 is probably going to be the most important meeting ever held! Pope Francis is asking us to pray, in advance of this meeting, that sustainable solutions to mitigate the very worst effects of the climate crisis can be agreed. Our Catholic Bishops are saying it is our responsibility to lift up the voices of the most vulnerable and advocate on their behalf.



Pope Francis said to world leaders at the Earth Day Summit in April, 'we have the means to rise up to the challenge . . . it is time to act.'

Catholics are being encouraged to sign the Healthy Planet, Healthy People petition. Details can be found at:

<https://thecatholicpetition.org/>

St Mark's will be taking part in the Hounslow Schools Climate Conference on 12th November 2021.

In a follow on assembly students learnt about CAFOD's Go Green challenge. Our school signed up for this climate-related fundraising challenge. Our Sixth Form students who have positions of responsibility (plus some willing extras) put on a simple bread and soup lunch and raised £408.34. We thank all those who supported this and the staff who also gave up time to help run this event. The Sixth Form students were brilliant - whether it was shopping for the bread, preparing the vegetables or cooking and serving the lunch. Thanks also to those who sold tickets and cleared up afterwards!



A candle-lit Procession from Westminster Cathedral to Farm Street Church is taking place on Monday 1st November at 6pm to pray for the success of COP26. This is being organised by the London Jesuit Centre, Jesuit Missions and Westminster Justice & Peace. More details can be found at:

<https://londonjesuitcentre.org/cop-26-candle-lit-procession>

Black History Month has been celebrated at St Mark's during the month of October. There will be more information about this in our school magazine Veritas. However, we finish this newsletter with the prayer read at assembly:

God of justice,

In your wisdom you create all people in your image, without exception.
Through your goodness, open our eyes to see the dignity, beauty, and worth
of every human being.

Open our minds to understand that all your children are brothers and sisters in
the same human family.

Open our hearts to repent of racist attitudes, behaviours, and speech which
demean others.

Open our ears to hear the cries of those wounded by racial discrimination,
and their passionate appeals for change.

Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the
wrongs of history.

And fill us with courage that we might seek to heal wounds, build bridges,
forgive and be forgiven, and establish peace and equality for all in our
communities.

Amen

During November we will be celebrating the Feast of All Saints and All Souls. We will be asking students to share with us the names of any family members or friends they would like us to remember, in our prayers, at this time.

Please remember if I can support you in any way do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is at the bottom of this letter or you can just ring the school and leave a message for Ivan.

Please be assured of my constant prayers for you and your family,

Ivan Cizmarik

School Lay Chaplain

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