

# St Mark's Chaplaincy Newsletter

February 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,  
Belated Happy New Year!

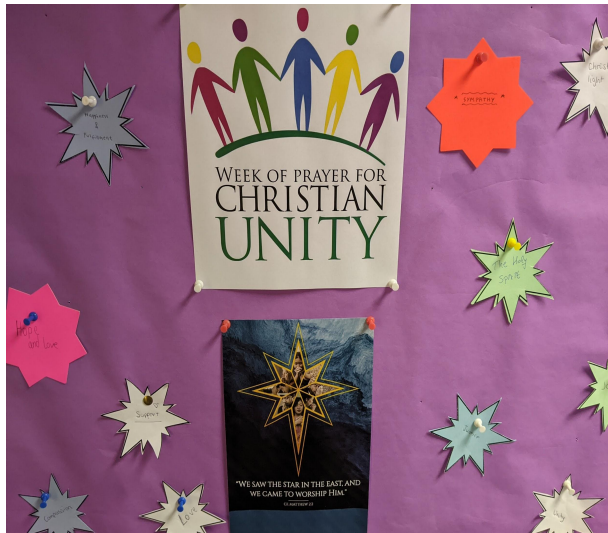
Our sixth Chaplaincy Newsletter was shared with you in December as we were preparing for Christmas. We do hope that you and your family had a blessed time.



## The Epiphany of the Lord

We were back in school for the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, but sadly were unable to have mass. However, students were able to reflect on the feast during form time. The Epiphany was the inspiration for the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



This took place from the 18th to the 25th January with resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches, who chose the theme : ***"We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him"*** (Mt 2:2).

The story of the Magi visiting the Holy Family in Bethlehem invites us to reflect on the importance of coming together to worship Jesus as one Christian family.

In school the students wrote their wishes for their brothers and sisters in Christ on stars. Many thanks to the Student Chaplaincy Team who helped with preparing the activity.

## Chaplaincy Team Introductions

Our Chaplaincy Team students will take turns in introducing themselves in each of our Chaplaincy Newsletters. In this newsletter we hear from Prylon and Delilah:

### Prylon

Hello there, I'm Prylon (9CA.), part of the Chaplaincy Team! Allow me to introduce myself. I have a few different hobbies like cycling, playing chess, playing my keyboard, basketball, cubing (yes, that's a hobby), reading, generally trying new things, etc. What I don't consider a hobby though is being part of the Chaplaincy Team, it's a devotion that I choose to keep and love dearly. My favourite Saint is St. Thomas Aquinas- a great philosopher, who will be my Confirmation Saint. I enjoy reading his philosophy.- what I believe is indispensably essential about him is that he truly wanted to be close to God and know Him- something we all should strive for. Being in the Chaplaincy Team, I want to help further our unity as a school- as part of the Church, that's why I joined. My favourite Bible passage is in the last Book of the Bible- Apocalypse 21:6

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

It truly illuminates Christ's love.

### Delilah

Hello all, I am Delilah in 9 Becket and I am a Chaplaincy Team member. A Saint that inspires me is St Josephine Bakhita because she endured so much but was still a symbol of forgiveness. Volunteering for Chaplaincy is important to me because it strengthens my relationship with God.

### St Josephine Bakhita

It is lovely to hear that St Josephine Bakhita is Delilah's favourite saint. We had an assembly about her and the work that goes on at Caritas Bakhita House, on her feast day - 8th February - known as Bakhita Day.



St Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of modern slavery and on her feast we are asked to raise awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking.

## [HUMAN TRAFFICKING: WHAT ARE THE SIGNS TO LOOK FOR](https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/human-trafficking-what-are-the-signs-to-look-for-769.php)

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### **Pastoral Care**

#### **Rainbows - Spectrum**

In previous Chaplaincy Newsletters we documented our plans for the launch of an additional pastoral support programme for our students. This happened in September 2021 when our Spectrum group met for the first time. Spectrum is a weekly peer support group for students who have experienced a significant loss or painful experience. Our very first group completed the programme on Tuesday 25th January. We are grateful to The Catholic Children's Society for this experience!



The students were very committed and together with the facilitators (Mrs O'Neill and myself) had a wonderful final 'Celebrate Me' session during which they reflected on and celebrated their journey together. The following words are from the students who participated in the programme:

'Every Monday after school, a group of Year 10s would meet in the school Chapel for the Rainbows Spectrum group and collectively discuss the feelings we went through because of our loss of a loved one. There were 12 sessions that included thinking and feeling activities, for example: Stages of grief, Our worries, Fears and disappointments, Reaching out and Endings and beginnings. We shared real life stories and our feelings towards other scenarios. Over the sessions, our feeling of safety in expressing our thoughts became stronger. We also felt understood and listened to through each topic we covered. This helped us gain trust with

each other in the group and this has definitely been beneficial for all of us going along. At the end of each session, we concluded with a "Today's thought" which left us with a positive note to take away with us.'

*"Spectrum has helped me gain trust and confidence to speak about my emotions and feelings. I felt that over the sessions, I learnt to understand my emotions which helped me to control my negative thoughts. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed each session and would recommend the Spectrum programme to any of those who are struggling through a loss and are finding it difficult to talk to someone and open up."*

*"Spectrum has helped me express my inside thoughts that I was too scared to share. By opening up in this group, I felt relieved and safe in the supportive environment which helped my mental health and mindset. In general, I loved attending this group every week as it helped me overcome my stress and sadness and this resulted in me being much happier. I recommend this group to all who are struggling".*

*"Spectrum has helped me with my emotions and expressing myself by thinking about things through different perspectives. I also came to understand that my own emotions aren't good or bad, they just are. Overall, I liked the group and would definitely recommend it because it would help you get through tough situations. Spectrum is a place where you can go and feel free to say whatever you feel and not feel judged or wrong about it".*

'As members of the group, we would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs O'Neill, Ivan the Chaplain and the creator Mrs Morillon for making this group possible! This amazing experience has helped us a lot. '

## **Westminster Synodal Pathway**

In our Christmas Newsletter we announced that we would be taking part in the Westminster Synodal Pathway. All students in Years 7-11 took part during their RE lessons. Sixth Form students and staff were also invited to take part.

We set aside a week in January when all students, during an RE lesson, were divided into small groups to discuss and reflect on 4 questions. They recorded their thoughts and ideas and these were collected and summarised. We then fed everything back to the Diocese.

The first question for discussion was: **What things about the Catholic Church do you love / respect?**

We had a wealth of answers here including: sense of community; feels like a family; love, support and care; the special connection with God.

Question two asked students: **Do you think the Church reaches out to ALL people and makes all people feel loved by God and valued?**

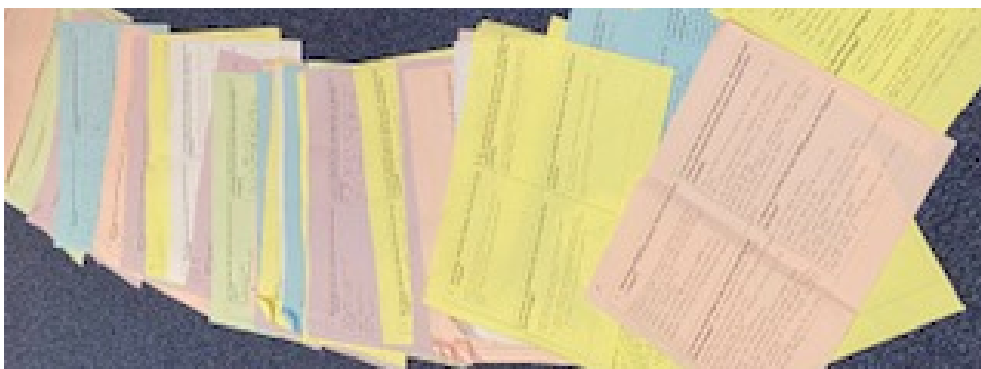
Again, this question brought a variety of answers. A number of students referred to the work of CAFOD and other charities who reach out to support poor and vulnerable people in the world. A significant number of students felt the Church could do more to reach out to the LGBT+ community and others felt the Church could do more to show that women are valued.

Question three was: **Are there some things in the Church's teaching that should change?**

Students had many ideas including allowing divorced people to re-marry; allowing women to be priests; allowing homeless people to sleep in churches; allowing the laity to have more responsibilities. Some did say they thought nothing needs to be changed.

Finally, question four asked: What do you think the Holy Spirit wants for the Church in the future? Many responses focused on the idea of an inclusive Church and community that does not discriminate, however, again our students had many, many ideas.

If anyone is interested in having the summary of responses sent to the Diocese on the Synthesis Form please do get in touch.



## Racial Justice Sunday 2022



This year's Racial Justice Sunday falls during Half-Term on Sunday, 13th February 2022.

The theme is "In the Image and Likeness of God" celebrating different presentations of the Holy Family from different countries and cultures.

Below is a link to a video from Bishop Paul McAleenan made for this special Sunday:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHFEcC4mFT8>

Resources for Racial Justice Sunday can be found in the following link that also has beautiful images, posters and prayers from a diverse cross-section of countries and cultures.

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/rjs22>

The Catholic Church Bishops' Conference of England and Wales are encouraging Catholics to mark the day by praying the words of Pope Francis taken from his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* – on fraternity and social friendship:

**Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,  
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,**

**so that we may discover anew  
that all are important and all are necessary,  
different faces of the one humanity  
that God so loves.  
*Amen.***

Finally, 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.

I wish all of you a restful half-term.

Be assured of my constant prayers for you and your family,

Ivan Cizmarik  
School Lay Chaplain

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