

St Mark's Chaplaincy Newsletter

December 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Our fifth Chaplaincy Newsletter was shared with you in October as we were preparing for November the month of the Holy Souls. We do hope that you and your family are having a blessed Advent season.



November - Month of the Holy Souls

Since returning to school we have celebrated the feasts of All Saints and Holy Souls. We had a special assembly to mark both of these days.

November is a special month in the Catholic Church as it is dedicated to remembering and praying for all who have died. Students and staff had an opportunity to write the names of their loved ones on cards and their prayer intentions were offered at a Remembrance Mass on Thursday 25th November. Fr Damian, from St Michael and St Martin's was the celebrant.

On the feast day of Saint Martin of Tours, November 11th, Fr Austin celebrated Mass during which the students who have become the Student Chaplaincy Team were commissioned. They have been extremely active during this season of Advent. We are grateful to Evelyn, Kyesha, Sian, Prylon, Tony, Aneira, Delilah, Rachel, Joel, Trinity and Matylda for putting themselves forward for this service. We are delighted that other students have come forward wanting to become part of this Team.

We started Advent, the season of preparation and anticipation of the nativity and birth of Jesus at Christmas, with a dedicated assembly. As we reflected on the ending of the Year of Saint Joseph we looked at lessons we can learn from this special saint during Advent.



During this special time of blessing the Chaplaincy Team organised Advent Lunchtimes in the Chapel where the school community could experience the richness of Catholic spirituality.

We would like to thank the Gideon Community for providing the Word of God for our youngest students.



During Anti - Bullying Week students were invited to create a collection of 'Kindness stones' which displayed a positive and encouraging message.

These stones have been displayed in the Chapel. During one of our Thursday masses Fr Austin encouraged students to build their faith and relationships on kindness. He said the message was clearly demonstrated on these kindness stones.



Well done to all the students who contributed to this and thanks to Mrs Morillon for organising this creative project.

As part of their Faith in Action programme our Year 12 students organised a Toy Drive for children who are being looked after by Social Services. The response of the school community was amazing. On Thursday 16th December we took a minibus of presents to Hounslow House. The staff there were overwhelmed by the generosity of our community. A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed for your kindness.



The Sixth Form students organised a food drive that we donated to the SVP at St Michael and St Martin's who are running a Parish Foodbank. The response to this was equally generous. It truly demonstrated FAITH in ACTION.

'I would like to thank you for thinking about our Parish Foodbank and supporting it with the necessary items. Praying for you all.'

Gifts bought by Faith in Action funds were also delivered to residents in some of our local care homes.

Finally, In January we will be taking part in the Westminster Synodal Pathway.

"The Holy Father is offering us the opportunity to participate in a time of listening and reflecting. He hopes this will help us to discern how God's presence comes into our lives and what the Spirit of God is prompting us to do anew, so that we might be more alive and creative in our response to the call of Jesus, our Way, Truth and Life." (Pastoral Letter 2-3 October 2021, Cardinal Vincent)

Pope Francis has called for this Synod to LISTEN to the voice of all in the Church, particularly those who feel their voice is not heard. We will be taking this opportunity seriously. Please find [here](#) the link to a short video produced by the All Saints Catholic Academy Trust to encourage pupils to participate in the Synodal Journey.

Sadly, as we break up today for our Christmas holiday we cannot gather together as Year groups for our end of term liturgies, but instead we will be having virtual liturgies once again. We are grateful to all the members of staff who are making this possible, in particular Mr Shore and Ms Jackson. We continue to pray for all who are affected by this ongoing pandemic and think particularly of all the members of our school community who are unwell at this time .

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts-
That the God who breathed this world into being
Placed stars into the heavens
And designed a butterfly's wing
Is the God who entrusted his life
to the care of ordinary people,
the God who became vulnerable that we might know
how strong is the power of Love
A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore.

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 joyful and blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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

Ivan Cizmarik

School Lay Chaplain

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