



DIOCESE OF
WESTMINSTER



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YOUTH MINISTRY

Annual Review 2017



DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER YOUTH MINISTRY

About

The Diocese of Westminster Youth Ministry (DOWYM) is the youth department of the Diocese of Westminster. It is based at the beautiful grounds of Waxwell House, in London, and operates with two teams: the SPEC retreat team and the CYM team.

SPEC was established in 1993 and is led by a core community which runs day and residential retreats for school pupils from across the diocese. The CYM team was established in 2013 and focuses on parish engagement, building networks and creating events across the diocese and beyond.

Both DOWYM teams operate largely independently of one another, but do partner and support each other when the occasion requires it.

Our Mission

Helping young people pursue the true, the good and the beautiful found in Christ, because each of us is made for greatness.

Our Vision

A diocese full of young people who are faithful Catholics and active in the Church, working towards becoming the saints and role models of the 21st century.

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To donate £5 towards our work with young people, text "Youth" to 70800.



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Bishop Nicholas Hudson



Bishop Nicholas Hudson at Aid to the Church in Need's Red Wednesday event at Westminster Cathedral

I am pleased to be able to present to you the Annual Review of Westminster Youth Ministry.

The year has been one filled with promise as the diocesan youth service strives to build on the foundations established over the last several years in response to the vision to which we committed ourselves as a Diocese, in a long and deeply fruitful process of discernment to which so many contributed and which was so ably launched by Fr Michael O'Boy.

The Diocesan Retreat Centre, SPEC, is now firmly established at its new home of Waxwell Farm, Pinner, and building work on the residential retreat block is complete, allowing the Diocese once again to offer retreat accommodation for parish groups and schools. It was deeply moving to have present at the opening ceremony several Grail Women - for decades the custodians of this beautiful place - and to hear one of them say of developments at Waxwell, "I think it's better now than it ever was!"

The Centre for Youth Ministry continues to support parish youth ministry and provide opportunities for young people to come together and be nourished in the faith, be it on pilgrimage to Rome last June, bringing young people to the Flame Congress in the Spring or establishing opportunities for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in local Summit events.

At the end of 2017 we said farewell to Phil Ross, the Director of Youth Ministry for the last five years. I would like to thank Phil for his deep dedication and boundless enthusiasm for bringing to life the Diocesan vision for youth ministry; for showing

outstanding leadership throughout his tenure, most especially in his inspired direction of the building project.

The vision Phil nurtured, and on which we continue to build, is beautifully captured in Pope Francis' message to young people in 2017, when he says, "God came to enlarge the horizons of our life in every direction. He helps us to give due value to the past so as better to build a future of happiness. Yet this is possible only if we have authentic experiences of love, which help us concretely to discern the Lord's call and to respond to it. For only that can bring us true happiness."

"Authentic experiences of love." As we reflect on the year that has passed and look to all that the next year holds for us - in particular the Synod of Bishops meeting, which will consider and process all different facets of 'Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment' - our hope is that Westminster Youth Ministry will indeed provide for our young people opportunities for 'authentic experiences of love' with the Lord and so help them to discern his call and the life, that 'life to the full', to which he calls each one of us and which is surely the key to happiness.

May God bless you always.

+Nicholas Hudson
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster

The Team

The Diocese of Westminster is blessed to have a creative and dedicated team of staff, committed to fulfilling Westminster Youth Ministry's mission and that of the mission of the Church given to us all by our founder, Jesus Christ.



Andrzej Wdowiak (Diocesan Youth Director)



Fr Mark Walker (Diocesan Youth Chaplain)



From left to right: **[1] Sara Rhodes** (Operations Manager), **[2] JJ Hussem** (Formation Coordinator and Programme Leader), **[3] Kevin Munday** (Caretaker), **[4] Ann Daly** (Retreat Leader), **[5] Callum Moore** (Youth Support Team), **[6] Dominic Cunliffe** (Youth Support Team), **[7] Aaron Rhodes** (Administration Assistant), **[8] Milan Poka** (Retreat Leader), **[9] Rebekah Curran** (Youth Support Team Leader), **[10] Riley McCullough** (Retreat Leader), **[11] Terry Toolan** (Assistant Director), **[12] Simon Rodgers** (Groundsman), **[13] James Kelliher** (Communications)

Made for Greatness



Faith in Jesus Christ breathes new life into our being. Like a gentle breeze, greeted by the morning sun, rooting our lives in Him is refreshing and gives us hope for the future. Life is seen through new eyes, illuminated by the light of God's eternal love for us.

Through Christ, we see that life is more than merely a succession of events, but rather it is the pursuit of the true, the good and the beautiful. He challenges us to break free of our sins and the empty promises of the world, and to achieve greatness.

In this mission to greatness, God calls each of us to take up our responsibilities and support each other in the relentless pursuit of holiness, so that, one day, we may join him and live forever in Paradise.

What Greatness looks like

Greatness takes various forms, as we all have our own talents and interests. For some, greatness may mean becoming a missionary in a far-away land, helping to raise the living standards of a poor community. For others, greatness may mean getting married and staying at home to raise a beautiful, holy family. One's mark of greatness may simply be an amazing prayer life.

In the many routes to greatness, the essential, common element is a desire to imitate the greatest role model in history: Jesus. In doing so, we become saint-like, which is the greatest of human endeavours and achievement. At Westminster Youth Ministry, we believe that this can be achieved in large part by pursuing in life that which is true, good and beautiful.

We try to craft our work with these three values in mind, in order to achieve our mission and vision.

What we do

Westminster Youth Ministry exists to support the youth of our diocese, and beyond, in discovering the love that Jesus Christ has for them, personally and individually, as well as the beauty and richness that is to be found in the Catholic faith. This is the reason for our existence. Practically, this contains lots of different and interconnected aspects. However, it can be summarised in the following five core areas:

1 Develop parish youth ministry

At the heart of our mission is the determination to support the development of an active and sustainable parish youth ministry programme throughout our diocese. This involves working closely with parish leadership teams to help build active youth and young adult communities in their parishes.

2 Support our youth leaders

Westminster has talented, passionate youth leaders scattered across the diocese, working in our parishes, helping young people to grow in their relationship with Christ and mature in their faith. We work to support these leaders through personal meetings, mentoring programmes, training schemes and general encouragement.

3 Nurture young people in their personal development

Nurturing the saints and role models of the 21st century requires a holistic approach. We tackle this with our SPEC retreat centre for young people in both a school and parish setting, the development of a comprehensive formation support structure, organising and supporting events focusing on youth and their formative years through training programmes and pilgrimages e.g. World Youth Day.

4 Bring together the various voices in the diocese

The Diocese of Westminster is unique given the rich and diverse nature of its multi-national constituency. The size of the diocese, stretching as it does from central London to Hertfordshire, certainly presents young Catholics with many opportunities and challenges when wishing to share their faith with others. Because of this, it can sometimes be difficult for young people to appreciate where they can meet like-minded Catholics and benefit from the vast range of charisms available. We are uniquely placed to provide signposts and support for this ever-growing population of young Catholics.

5 Inform the world

As the universal Church, we feel it is right for us to build bridges with everyone around the world. Because of that, our website and social media are regularly updated with news, pictures, videos etc., keeping visitors up-to-date with what we're doing and our future plans.

The following pages will explore in greater detail these five core aspects of our work.

Strategy

In bringing our Vision to life, the first thing to know is the stages of formation young people need to go through to be well formed, active and joyful Catholics. We employ a five-stage strategy, which we drew out of our work with parishes, organisations and individuals.

1 Connect

Connection is the first step of our ministry. The goal of this stage is to connect young people with peers in their parishes and make them feel a part of the Church community. People are much more likely to continue on their faith journey if they are connected to others who are walking with them in their faith journey. To help young people become, and stay, connected to the parish we have three major approaches: the first is helping parishes to establish parish-specific groups targeted at young people; the second is through the ongoing development of our Source groups; the third is via our retreat centre as a SPEC retreatant.

2 Encounter

Connection to one another is great, but greater still is the life-giving and transformative encounter we as Christians can experience with the person of Jesus Christ. Upon encountering the living Christ in prayer, young people can begin a personal relationship with God in their life. Encountering Christ is often the most essential stage of developing to spiritual maturity as it is where most people receive the desire to animate an ongoing personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To help young people in their spiritual journey, we have crafted programmes and experiences like The Summit, Resonate, pilgrimages and SPEC retreats to give them ample opportunity for encounter with Jesus Christ in prayer.

3 Conversion

Once an authentic encounter with Christ has been experienced, the most natural response is joy and contrition. This mixed feeling is due to a person simultaneously experiencing the overwhelming love of God and the shame of realising how they have failed to live up to such a love. What is important is that we then follow up on this experience, giving the young people opportunities to respond to this encounter and, if they so wish, ask God for the grace to change their life in fairly fundamental ways. Several ways we allow for this to happen are: programmes like ECHO and The Pursuit, which break open Christian living and life; promotion of the sacraments; and promotion of spiritual direction.

4 Growth

Upon having a conversion of heart, young people naturally look to develop their understanding of their new faith. We believe that this understanding is most fully realised in the objective truths found within the Bible, the Church and the Sacraments. The fourth stage of our ministry involves having programmes that teach the art of Christian living and loving at a deeper level than looked at before. Community and prayer are naturally still supported and this stage aims to help nurture the friendships that have developed along this spiritual journey. Examples of the programmes we run for people at this stage are Resonate, The Source and the SPEC mission year.

5 Mission

God calls us to participate in His mission; how we serve in this mission is deeply personal. Our hope is that by going through the various stages of our programme, young people will be well-equipped to discern this mission God asks of them. We are also keen to provide for, and support, people interested in getting involved in youth ministry. For those aged 18-25 we have the SPEC mission year that both equips missionaries with the skills they need and gives them the opportunity to minister to the young people of the diocese. For those looking to go into long-term ministry, we help set up and support various parish youth leaders and lay chaplains across the diocese. Our youth leader network aims to provide training, support and community to these brilliant people.



▲ *The cyclical nature of the 5 Stage Strategy and programmes suitable for each stage*

Programmes

As a youth service, we endeavour to help both the youth and those working with them to develop their gifts and talents, enabling them to more effectively proclaim the Good News.

8-11 years (Primary)	11-14 years (Lower Secondary)	14-16 years (Upper Secondary)	16-18 years (Sixth Form)	18-35 years (Young Adult)
Parish Youth Groups	Parish Youth Groups / The Source	Parish Youth Groups / The Source	Parish Youth Groups / The Source	Parish / Diocesan Young Adult groups
SPEC as retreatant	SPEC as retreatant	SPEC as retreatant	SPEC as retreatant	SPEC Mission Year
	The Summit	The Summit	The Summit	Resonate
		Advent / Lent Retreats	Advent / Lent Retreats	Resonate Weekend
		Music Ministry	Music Ministry	Music Ministry
			Pilgrimages	Pilgrimages
			ECHO as 6th Former	ECHO as 6th Former
			The Pursuit	

▲ A breakdown of the programmes suitable for each age range

Pilgrimages

Going on pilgrimage is an important part of our Catholic faith and Westminster Youth Ministry takes part in, and organizes, opportunities for our young people every year. These include the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, regular pilgrimages like World Youth Day and special, one-offs like the Holy Land and Rome. In these pilgrimages, we work to accompany the young pilgrims on their spiritual journey, by getting to know them, answering their questions, asking some of our own to challenge them and to try to be examples of good Christian living.

Music Ministry Scholarship

The Music Ministry Scholarship exists as a way of developing the skills of young people in providing music in the life of their parish and the wider Church. It is for young people who are already fairly skilled vocally or instrumentally, and who are involved at a reasonable level of commitment in their parish or school. The scholars receive free sessions with Edwin Fawcett on a regular basis for a set time period. In the early sessions, the scholars will work out an individual plan with Edwin for developing their skills, with specific targets. These targets need not be set in stone but will be free to evolve as the sessions continue, tailored to the young person's capabilities.

SPEC



SPEC is the residential retreat centre for young people in the Diocese of Westminster. As an integral part of Westminster Youth Ministry, SPEC is dedicated to providing a space for young people to retreat from the busyness of daily life in order to reflect on, and experience, the presence of God in their lives. SPEC also provides a formation year for volunteer missionaries to share in the life and work of the SPEC Community.

ECHO



ECHO is a retreat based on the teachings of Theology of the Body (TOB). The retreat takes place in several stages. First, there is a young adults weekend retreat where the nucleus of the community is developed. The second stage of ECHO is the Sixth-form retreat. The young people are invited into the already-established community to explore TOB in sessions, talks and activities designed for their level.

The Summit



The Summit is Westminster Youth Ministry's main in-house diocesan event for young Catholics from 14-18 years old, and takes place in various parishes around the diocese. It's a chance for young people in the diocese to socialise, share a meal together, learn more about their faith and be introduced to a deeper level of prayer and adoration. There is also a guest speaker and live music.

The Source



The Source offers young people an opportunity to share in accompaniment with other Catholics in their parish, both of their own age and the leader or guides who support them. After some food and life-sharing, The Source also aims to address the taboo of discussing faith, with prepared videos and discussion questions that gently break open the faith in an informal manner.

Resonate



Resonate is our primary in-house event for young adult Catholics from 18-35 years old. It is for those looking to explore more of their faith by building community and discussions that explore the faith. Hosted at the home of our ministry, the evening begins with a shared meal; this gives a great opportunity to meet new people. During the evening, there is a talk and discussion that focuses upon the art of Catholic living.

The Pursuit



The Pursuit is an open retreat day specifically for Sixth Formers. Those leaving Year 11, 12 or 13 are welcome to join us for a day of diving into what it means to be in pursuit of a life of meaning and happiness. There will be engaging activities, dynamic talks and opportunities to get to know other young adults in small groups and over meals. It's all about asking those questions that really matter, and deciding what you want to pursue in life.

2017 Highlights



January

Youth 2000 Year-End retreat (Maria Fidelis Catholic School)
Catholic Underground (St. Aloysius, Camden)
Borehamwood Confirmation evening (St. Teresa of the Child Jesus Church)

February

The Summit (St. Aloysius, Camden)
Youth Worker Training Day (Newman House)
Lourdes Mass (Westminster Cathedral)
RMI Sisters event (South Kensington)

March

Youth Worker Training Day (Newman House)
Dollis Hill Confirmation evening (St. Mary & St. Andrew)
Flame (Wembley Arena)

April

Theology of the Body Symposium (St. Patrick's, Soho)
The Summit (St. Aloysius, Camden)

May

HTB Conference (Royal Albert Hall)
Barnes Confirmation afternoon (St. Osmund's)
Uxbridge Youth Group (Our Lady of Lourdes and Saint Michael)

June

St. Mark's School Hounslow retreat days (Wintershall)
Rome Pilgrimage (Rome)
Lourdes Training Day (St. Charles Sixth Form College)



July

Catholic Voices and Chris Stefanick Training (Canning Town)
Cardinal Wiseman retreat days (Cardinal Wiseman School)
Rome Reunion (Camden)
Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage (Lourdes)

August

World Youth Day reunion (Waxwell House)
SPEC Induction (Waxwell House)
Youth 2000 festival (Walsingham)

September

Kenton Parish day (All Saints, Harrow)
St Anne's School assembly (Enfield)
Ealing Abbey Confirmation retreat (Ealing)
Fresher's Fair (Middlesex University)

October

Diocesan Walsingham Pilgrimage (Walsingham)
SPEC new residential complex opening (Waxwell House)
ECHO weekend/ECHO date night (Waxwell House)
Dumb Ox visit to Allen Hall (Allen Hall)

November

Dollis Hill Confirmation (St. Mary & St. Andrew)
The Summit (St. Aloysius, Camden)
World Youth Day information evening (Centre for Youth Ministry)
Resonate (Centre for Youth Ministry)

December

Youth Mass (St. Aloysius, Camden)
The Summit (St. Joseph's, Stevenage)
Youth 2000 New-Year retreat (St Bonaventure's School)

SPEC community

With residential retreats well under way, we have had a chance this year to dig deep into the three core elements of what we do – follow Jesus, disciple missionaries and run retreats.

Follow Jesus

We are very grateful to Bishop Nicholas for commissioning our new volunteer missionaries (VMs) in September 2017, giving them each a copy of the Liturgy of the Hours; which we pray as a community every day. Day in, day out, on retreat or off retreat, the VMs and staff come together to praise the Lord in the morning, evening and at night.

“This place is an absolute Oasis. You don’t find places like this any more. I look forward to coming.”

Sheila, agency chef

We can’t underemphasize the importance of a Rule of Life - the volunteer agreement that the VMs commit to live by. It is based on the Benedictine rule of life, as well as active youth ministry and mission movements in the Church, like Life Teen. It talks about glorifying God in everything, from stewardship of resources and the environment to healthy management of conflict. In short, we aim to give all who walk through the door a spiritual and personal encounter with Christ.

Volunteer Missionaries and Formation

At SPEC, we desire to live into our Catholic identity as individuals and a community, seizing the opportunities we have concerning formation. We strive to invest in, and continuously form, the community. By doing so, the retreats we run automatically become more authentic, Catholic, with content coming from discerned hearts and docility to the Holy Spirit.

We strive to be exceptional in our formation programme and lifestyle at SPEC. “Formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all” (*The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful*, 63). Our goal is to bear fruit for the Kingdom while being fully alive in Him.

Every Tuesday is a non-contact day (NCD), or so-called formation day, at SPEC when no retreat groups come in and we consciously invest in the young adults that serve with us voluntarily as missionaries. The formation programme revolves around the four pillars of Christian formation: spiritual (prayer), human person (community), intellectual (formation) and mission (pastoral/apostolic). There are different ways of categorizing the four pillars but they all boil down to honouring the whole human person.

Through our rhythm of daily community prayer and our conscious investment in our volunteer missionaries, we strive to become “contemplatives in action” (RM 91) for the retreats to be as fruitful as possible; run by young adults who are praying and being formed and minister to the young people of our schools and parishes.

Formation is a balance between the head (catechise) and the heart (evangelise). Both are needed. We recognise the need to be educated on Church matters, dogma, doctrine and in-depth catechesis. We also need to experience intercessory prayer, discover our charisms, practice prophetic prayer and learn about Ignatian discernment.

Being part of SPEC is a magical experience; it’s like entering a Catholic Narnia and living there for a year. SPEC is very inspiring aesthetically. The old house and the expansive garden provide the right space for reflection and grounding in God’s presence amongst his creation. Ministering to the youth alone is so life-giving but what’s even better is sharing that experience among other faithful and joyful young people. Community life is so exciting, there is so much you can learn from others’ personal testimonies and experiences. It is also a crucial opportunity to be open, vulnerable and charitable to others. After spending so much time around the members of the community, it feels like you’ve known them forever and wish you could minister together for even longer. Ultimately, the rhythm of prayer is what fuels and binds us spiritually. Having adoration every day in your house is such a blessing. I have personally grown so much in patience and the ability to discern God’s voice in disparate situations. It is a spiritual adventure that shaped my personality, one that will never leave my memory, and one that I recommend to everyone.

Léa, volunteer missionary from Lebanon

Our formation coordinator plans and leads sessions in collaboration with our youth chaplain. We also have multiple guest speakers come in throughout the year to lead formation sessions. Examples of formation sessions run are Theology of the Body, the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, and the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Gaudete et Exsultate*. We had two Nashville Dominican sisters spend time with us and lead formation, we have had sessions on contemplative prayer, on leadership, and on visioning. We have had converts to Christianity from Judaism and Islam come speak and we have used the Wild Goose series on the Holy Spirit by Fr. Dave Pivonka TOR. We also read a book together annually.

The planning of the formation programme requires listening, prayer and discernment to hear what God is inviting SPEC into each year with the people that make up the community that year, which in many ways is different from last year and next year. Living in our beautiful capital-city of London, we want to enable our VMs to experience the richness of our local Church.



The SPEC community with Bishop Hudson



SPEC volunteer missionaries in discussion



The SPEC community in Eucharistic procession



Fr Mark Walker leading a reflection



The new residential building



The kitchen of the new residential building



One of the break-out rooms in the new residential building



One of the larger meeting rooms in the new residential building



Cardinal Vincent Nichols blessing the new residential building

Before the year, I was a little bit afraid, but my first experiences – when the whole community travelled to Mount Snowdonia – gave me a lot of courage. Since I grew up in a Christian environment I tried to have a good relationship with the Lord, but I hadn't met such a living faith as in SPEC. My main purposes before the year were to improve my English, get to know new people and cultures and get close to myself. Overall, the biggest blessing was to know more about Jesus and my Catholic heritage. Through the young people, I received so much love and positive experiences and I truly hope what I've given to them leads them and myself to a happier future.

Ákos, volunteer missionary from Hungary

This is done by informing them on numerous events, conferences, retreats and activities to possibly partake in.

The residing staff disciple the VMs one-on-one and walk with them on their journey. Community living isn't always easy, but it provides much opportunity to grow, heal and invest. We have incredible potential at SPEC - with our grounds and investment in formation - to become a hub for Europe here in London to form young adults in the new evangelisation of which our young people on retreat greatly benefit.

Our VMs are between 18-25 years old and come from all over the world. We can host a total of 14 VMs to serve with us each academic year. We would love for the young adults in your parish and year 13 students in your schools to know more

about what we are doing. We have our website and flyers, but visits are always welcome as we strive to be hospitable and share with people all God is doing here.

Run Retreats

The new residential complex was opened on 3 October 2017 by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, on the anniversary of the very first groups arriving at SPEC in 1992. Many of those who had been instrumental in the founding and development of SPEC were also there, including Fr Vladimir Felzmann, Fr Michael O'Boy and many past chaplains and SPEC Alumni. It was a beautiful moment to celebrate a milestone of the vision for youth ministry - a place dedicated to making change in the lives of young people through residential retreats.

"I had forgotten how exceptional this place was; it really is an experience that they can have for life. The kids just love it."

Craig, primary school teacher

We run three residential retreat streams: years 5-6, 7-8 and 9-13, which include team-building activities, testimonies, small groups, skits, camp fire, Mass, Adoration, confession and games on our beautiful property of around seven acres. We also run two brand-new confirmation residentials: *Equipped* and *Head & Heart*.

Retreats



Young adults at the first ever Catholic Leadership Retreat at SPEC

A retreat is an opportunity to step back from our routines and enter an environment that assists us in reflecting on the big questions and evaluating our relationship with God.

Each year, around Easter, the staff and VMs at Waxwell House enter into a process of prayer and discernment to help decide the retreat themes for the next academic year. It is around these discerned themes that the retreats are formatted. With the core theme decided, all retreats will provide three essential elements: faith, fellowship and fun.

Faith

All of our retreats are centred around the invitation to meet Christ. This can come through talks, testimony, prayer exercises, Adoration, Mass, Reconciliation and devotionals. The SPEC community engages young people in their faith and give answers to some of the questions they have about what a lived relationship with God looks like. Along with being a place for spiritual growth, SPEC retreats are a forum for catechesis.

Fellowship

Along with the journey towards Christ is a journey of growing with each other. The young people are challenged to be present to one another throughout their time at Waxwell

House. Meals, sleeping hours and free time are also a chance to chat and share about what makes each person's life unique: our families, our friends, our likes, our dislikes and even our struggles. We hope that, by the end of a retreat, the young people are able to see the image of God reflected in their relationships with each other.

Fun

We firmly believe that where we encounter joy, happiness and fun, we are encountering God's goodness. VMs will lead retreatants in large and small group games in order to warm them up. The gardens are equipped with two football goals for use at free time. Various activities are available, including frisbee, exploring the trails on our grounds, playing hide-and-seek and taking up crafts, arts, music and drama.

Examples of our retreats

Every week, the SPEC residential team runs both day and residential retreats with hundreds of young people from across the diocese. To support parishes and schools that would struggle to bring their young people to our centre, our outreach team runs several day retreats further afield. In 2017, we ran day retreats for St Marks, Hounslow, as well as several school retreat days for schools like Cardinal Wiseman. We also work with many parishes like, Ealing Abbey and Dollis Hill, to provide day retreats in-parish.

Parish Youth Ministry

The heart of the work we do is supporting our parishes as they journey with their young people.

Our vision is a diocese full of young people who are faithful Catholics and active in the Church, working towards becoming the saints and role models of the 21st century. A key area in bringing this vision to life is through the development of parish youth ministry.

We know that the greatest developments in faith happen through sustained relationships over time. Initially, this happens in the family, but is invaluable supported by the wider family: the parish community. Therefore, this beating heart is where we, too, wish to support our young people.

We aim to develop, within the parish context, youth groups that are both sustainable and customised to the young people they serve. We are passionate about accompanying our young people in their personal pilgrimage of faith, and are committed to finding ways for them to connect their unique experience of faith to the lived reality of the Church.

Parish outreaches and contacts

One key way we do this is supporting the parish on the ground. During 2017, the number of parishes we have engaged with continued to increase. We have prioritised visits to parishes, both to see youth workers and volunteers, as well as to visit their youth groups. Through a combination of reaching out to our current list of parish contacts and volunteers, as well as actively seeking and responding to new parishes as they come forward, we aim to be present for the journey. From the beginning stages of initial parish visits and after-Mass meetings to establish what a parish community needs, to the continuing support of youth group 'drop-ins' and individual meetings to check-in with those who run the youth groups, we are committed to being a continual part of this process. 2017 saw the continuation of this commitment to the different parishes across the diocese as part of this branch of our ministry. It's a great joy for us to see parishes continue to grow with their young people, to see in what new ways God is moving, and to see the fruit that comes from the different projects that have started.

Youth Leader Network

The reality of leading a youth group is often unglamorous and unnoticed. As part of our commitment to supporting parishes, this means in a very particular way supporting those youth workers and volunteers who make it happen week after week.

Aside from our parish visits to check-in and see how they are doing, we also aim to have a termly gathering for our youth leaders; an opportunity for them to gather together and meet others who do similar work in other parishes. We feel

it's important to help to foster this sense of community and encourage the sharing of ideas and resources. It is also an opportunity for us to thank them for all they do! We also offer youth leader training; we ran two days centrally and offer this service to parishes on an individual need-by-need basis.

Ss Michael and Martin, Hounslow (Parish Spotlight)

What do you do in the parish for young people?

I [Ivan Cizmarik] run a youth club which is for Years 7 and 8, aiming to create the opportunity for young people to socialise and have fun in fellowship with Jesus and others. In the youth club, young people can get to know one another and make friends before they begin our Confirmation programme in Year 9. As a catechist, I'm involved in our busy Confirmation programme. It's a privilege for me to accompany our teenage candidates during their preparation for receiving this wonderful sacrament. I am one of the people who meet children (Year 5 and below) before Sunday Masses and give them stickers which they collect for the purposes of admission to Catholic schools. For me, it's a lovely opportunity to get to know them, and they know me as I see them weekly. For young adults, there is an opportunity to meet together weekly and socialise by sharing snacks and growing deeper in faith of Jesus and knowledge of Church teaching. Normally we have a topic of the week, followed by discussion. Once a year we clean the local park as our response to the Pope Francis encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

How have you seen it grow or change over 2017?

The parish has continued to grow. There have been times of ups and downs when young people had not come to the youth club and young adults meeting but have then returned.

What was a highlight event of 2017?

I'd say Flame 2017 in Wembley. We attended the event as the young adults group. What an atmosphere! Uplifting content, great speakers and prayerful worship songs. It was enjoyable and I believe it helped to bond the group together.

What are your hopes for the future?

My hope is to offer more opportunities for teenagers aged between 14-17, where they can meet new friends, enjoy themselves and be spiritually nourished.

The Summit

The Summit has been an initiative that we have been running for a number of years now. However, we have always been running it from our home in Somers Town. During 2017, we decided to acknowledge the need to support the parishes more locally, and so we took the decision to move The Summit to be based within deaneries. Our first 'Summit Local' was in Stevenage in December 2017. We had about 40 young people turn up from six parishes. During 2018, we hope to grow the number of 'Summit Locals' that we run.



St. Mark's School at Wintershall



Dominic giving a talk to a group of young people



Callum leads an icebreaker at The Summit in Stevenage

Pilgrimages



Pilgrimages are an excellent way for Catholics of any age to grow in their faith. In 2017, there were two main pilgrimages for WYM: Lourdes and Rome.

Lourdes

As with every year, a group of a few hundred young people from across the diocese – principally via their schools – participated in this year’s Lourdes pilgrimage, in the role of a Redcap. The role of Westminster Youth Ministry is to support the Redcaps in their spiritual journey, talking to them about how they’re getting on and engaging them in a way that they probably don’t often – if at all – experience outside of the Lourdes context.

2017’s edition of the Lourdes pilgrimage had various highlights, including the opportunity to sit down in teams of two for lunch and dinner with the young pilgrims in the hotels in which they were staying. The team was able to get to know the pilgrims better personally, and were also asked lots of questions about the faith – which provided for some lively conversations!

Rome

Our biggest pilgrimage of the year was to Rome, in June. We took a group of young people, led by the then-diocesan youth chaplain Fr David Reilly, on a journey to the Eternal City.

Highlights include exploring the remarkable Vatican Museum, which requires more than one day to truly appreciate and take in its vast treasures. The tour included visiting the famous Sistine Chapel and, afterwards, the beautiful Vatican Gardens.

In the gardens there is a train station, and our pilgrimage group boarded a train to make our way to the papal summer residence and vacation retreat, Castel Gandolfo. It was a blessing to be at this lovely place and the group enjoyed a tour that took us around the gardens at Castel Gandolfo.

We also got to visit the seaside town of Nettuno. This is the home of Saint Maria Goretti and we were blessed to visit the basilica dedicated to her and learn about her short, but powerful, life.

Another highlight was morning Mass in the Venerable English College, where many of our seminarians are trained. It is a beautiful place.

Partnerships



Young adults at the ECHO retreat camp



Music Ministry scholars



Music Ministry scholars with Edwin Fawcett



Young adults at the ECHO retreat camp

As our mission becomes ever-more developed, we recognize the essential role that skilled partners play in helping to advance sustainable spiritual growth among young people.

Throughout 2017, we engaged regularly with a range of partners and we are grateful for their collaboration.

We enjoyed a growing, close relationship with our Youth Leader Network, which included hosting a couple of food and drinks evenings in the local pubs. It has been a great time to get our fellow youth workers in the same room and enjoy a simple evening of discussion, food and drink. Over the years, these have been increasingly well-attended in terms of numbers; we hope to continue to engage and grow this network in 2018.

There has also been evident fruit from the Curia Days, where the various departments of the Diocese are invited for a day of talks, prayer and sharing of visions and strategies. It has been encouraging, and helpful, to be able to engage with departments that we would otherwise not encounter on a day-to-day basis, especially as Westminster Youth Ministry does not share a space within Vaughan House. Having already the context of the first Curia meeting in 2016, the meeting in

2017 felt like a new shift in terms of relaxed atmosphere and confidence of all involved.

We have also been in collaboration with the Sisters of Bon Secours, who have ministries across France, Peru, Ireland, Great Britain, Africa and the United States. We were approached by Sister Pat, from the USA, to work with her in finding young adults from our diocese to do peer-led retreats running off from their programmes and training. This work is ongoing as we continue to try to reach out to those we know and pull a team together for them.

Notable and very generous support was received throughout the year from Edwin Fawcett, the renowned composer and musician who has led our Music Ministry Day for three years and guided our music scholarship students with professionalism and joy.

Dumb Ox Ministries has continued to assist us in developing our Theology of the Body programme and we had the opportunity to host ECHO UK in October 2017, building on the success of the 2016 ECHO.

We rely heavily on countless people and thank them for helping us throughout 2017. Throughout 2018, we shall continue to work with many partners and thank them very much in advance.

The Future

“The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence.” (GE 1)

Westminster Youth Ministry has been striving to find new and innovate ways to enable and equip our young people to become the saints of the 21st Century. 2017 saw a lot of growth as we continued to discern and expand our activities, creatively looking at how to support young people within our diocese in taking the next step in their personal journeys of faith.

We hope to build on this in 2018, and to continue to support, encourage and provide moments for encounter. We are looking for ways to build on what has been started, and to continue to ask what God is doing today. 2018 is already presenting many opportunities for us to do this.

In October 2018, a synod will be held in Rome on ‘Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment’. We are excited about the opportunities this presents to engage with some of the bigger questions that young people ask about the future that lays before us and how we are to understand how to live into God’s dream for us. We are eager to see how Pope Francis and the leaders of the Church will continue their pastoral support towards the youth during this synod and beyond.

We are looking forward to supporting parishes at a more local level during 2018, through a new set of resources for small groups, and more deanery-based Summit events. We also hope to support young people in taking the next step in their journey by offering more open retreats, and opportunities to learn leadership skills, so as to equip them to start their own projects and initiatives.

We hope to provide numerous opportunities for young people in our diocese to be able to access what we offer, and for it to be suitable for the stage that they are at, but also to present the gentle invitation to take another step forwards - to know the life that is to be found in Jesus Christ, the beauty and companionship to be found in His Church, and the integral role they have in this story.

2018 is presenting for us the challenge to do more than plant seeds, but to continue to see and support the growth that comes. We do not want to dream too small, but look forward with a great expectancy to all that is possible.





Young adults at the new residential building during the ECHO retreat camp



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