

Secondary Schools Newsletter September 2009

“We have set our hope on the living God” (1 Tim 4:10)

When Pope Benedict spoke to young people in Sydney at the World Youth Day celebrations he said
“let yourselves be shaped by him in order to be messengers of divine love, capable of building a future of hope for all humanity.”

On this World Youth Day he reiterated this theme saying:

“The question of hope is truly central to our lives as human beings and our mission as Christians, especially in these times. We are all aware of the need for hope, not just any kind of hope, but a firm and reliable hope. Youth is a special time of hope because it looks to the future with a whole range of expectations. When we are young we cherish ideals, dreams and plans. Youth is the time when decisive choices concerning the rest of our lives come to fruition. Perhaps this is why it is the time of life when fundamental questions assert themselves strongly: Why am I here on earth? What is the meaning of life? What will my life be like? And again: How can I attain happiness? Why is there suffering, illness and death? What lies beyond death? These are questions that become insistent when we are faced with obstacles that sometimes seem insurmountable: difficulties with studies, unemployment, family arguments, and crisis in friendships or in building good loving relationships, illness or disability, lack of adequate resources as a result of the present widespread economic and social crisis. We then ask ourselves: where can I obtain and how can I keep alive the flame of hope burning in my heart? This hope “can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain”

As we start the new term we pray for the grace to create opportunities for others to encounter the hope that comes from God.

Becoming a People of Hope

An implementation guide for schools will be launched by Bishop Declan at the Heads' Conference in October. At the conference Heads will also be given copies for Heads of RE. Copies will also be available to download from the diocesan website. This document which is based on consultation with schools during the Seeking the Face of Christ initiative is a reflection of best practice outlined by schools themselves. Once you have the document we would encourage the school community to reflect on the sections outlined and consider if there are areas they need to further develop.

RE Day October 2009

Kevin Treston will be leading a day for RE teachers on Monday 12th October on the theme of “Using and Presenting Scripture creatively in RE”. I regret we have to make a charge for this day of £40. This includes lunch and materials. Kevin is an internationally renowned speaker and has a great deal of experience in RE. **Please book onto this course as soon as possible.** Please note this replaces the head of RE meeting for this term.

Section 48 New Guidelines

The new guidelines from OFSTED come into force this September, as a result of this Section 48 Guidelines will also change. The new guidelines for our Diocese come into force from January 2010. We are running information sessions on this during this term. The first of which will be on **Monday September 28th from 10.30am to 1pm** Governors are welcome to attend this session but training for governors will also be offered on September 28th from 7pm till 9pm at Alexander House. If you are updating your SEF form from September onwards then we would ask that you use the new SEF form which will be available after September 28th

NOCN News

For those who wish the annual report from NOCN on 6th form RE is available. Please contact me by e mail for this. Those schools doing NOCN this year please remember to complete the required forms.

The Year for Priests

Pope Benedict XVI has called the whole Church to celebrate a Year for Priests. It began on 19th June 2009, the Feast of the Sacred Heart and will finish in June 2010. This is an opportunity to reflect on the work of priests and also encourage young people to think about a vocation to the religious life. Materials from the diocese are available on the diocesan website including podcasts of interviews with various clergy and from Fr Robert King the vocations director for the diocese. There is also a specific website www.yearforpriests.org run by the Birmingham diocese which contains materials which might be useful.

Forthcoming Events:

- **Mass for all those who work in Catholic Education.**
Our annual education Mass takes place this year on November 26th at Clifton Cathedral at 7pm . This is intended to provide all teachers, governors, support and ancillary staff an opportunity to reflect on their vocation, renew their commitment, celebrate together and share their stories. Staff working in non catholic schools are very welcome. A poster is attached to this newsletter and I would ask that you publicise this date in your school and encourage colleagues to attend. New members of staff and new governors will be commissioned at this time and existing members of staff and governors have the opportunity to renew their commitment.
- **NQT Day**
A day for all NQT staff or those new to Catholic Education will be held **at Alexander House on September 25th**. This is an opportunity to meet new colleagues from around the diocese, develop a greater understanding of the philosophy and purpose of Catholic Schools and reflect on practice. A poster is enclosed giving further details. I would be grateful if you would promote this with your colleagues.

- **Thursday 12th November 4pm to 7pm Preparing for Advent**

An exploration into how we help young people celebrate Advent and grow in their understanding of the season. This will involve looking at art, media and prayer resources and is suitable for those who work with young people in the age ranges 5-18. This will be held at Alexander House. Please book directly with Jenny on 01179025593 or email jenny.fitzgerald@cliftdiocese.com

Resources

- www.culham.ac.uk The website has useful resources for liturgy and links to other areas.
- **Priesthood: A Life Open to Christ: By Daniel Cronin**
Cost £10 ISBN 9780854397624 The Year of the Priesthood' celebrates the life and mission of priests in the Church throughout the world today. Its aim is to highlight the importance of the priestly calling and to support priests, and those in formation, in their daily life and work. This book offers insights, for both into priestly life and ministry as experienced by 78 priests from around the world - from the Holy Father to one of the newest assistant priests and from the youngest to the oldest. Although not really suitable directly for most young people it could provide valuable reference material.

Order of Mass in 8 Languages:

ISBN 9788851401351 Cost £3.75 The complete Order of Mass, including the Eucharistic Prayers, in Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Danish and Polish.

Helping Teenagers to Pray by Mark Yaconelli

ISBN 9780281060757 Cost £9.95 Helping Teenagers to Pray is divided into two sections: the first offers some reflections on the nature of prayer and adolescence; the second describes a variety of prayer experiences, exercises, traditional prayer methods, settings and strategies to help young people uncover the presence of God in their lives.

God Bless and thank you for all the work you do.

Ann Fowler.