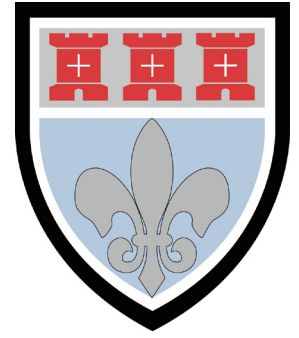


ST MARY'S WORD

Headteacher's introduction



I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of St Mary's Word for this academic year. This termly update aims to capture a selection of the wonderful activities taking place at St Mary's, linked to the Spiritual Life of the school, in its broadest sense. This update further complements the St Mary's termly newsletter and our regular Shine bulletins, in celebrating the many God-given gifts and talents of our students.

It is fantastic to see so many students making the most of their gifts and talents to give service to others. A wonderful example of this was our collection of hampers during Advent. Students and families contributed so generously to the hamper collection, allowing us to donate hundreds of hampers to very good causes. It is also wonderful to see students taking part in the John Paul II Award and the Faith in Action scheme. Our Remembrance Service in November was another highlight, with students showing such reverence when remembering those who had died in the First World War and more recent wars and conflicts.

May I thank everyone for your continued support for our work in school, as we aim to give every student an excellent holistic education here at St Mary's.

Very best wishes, Miss Patterson, Headteacher.

Contents

Page 1

St Mary's Remembers the Fallen

Page 2

The John Paul II Award
Faith in Action Group

Page 3

Morning Pray

Page 4

Hamper Collection

Page 5

Assemblies
Weekly Friday Mass

Page 6

Liturgies and Christmas Service

Page 7

Prayer for Christmas
Year 12 Day of Aspiration

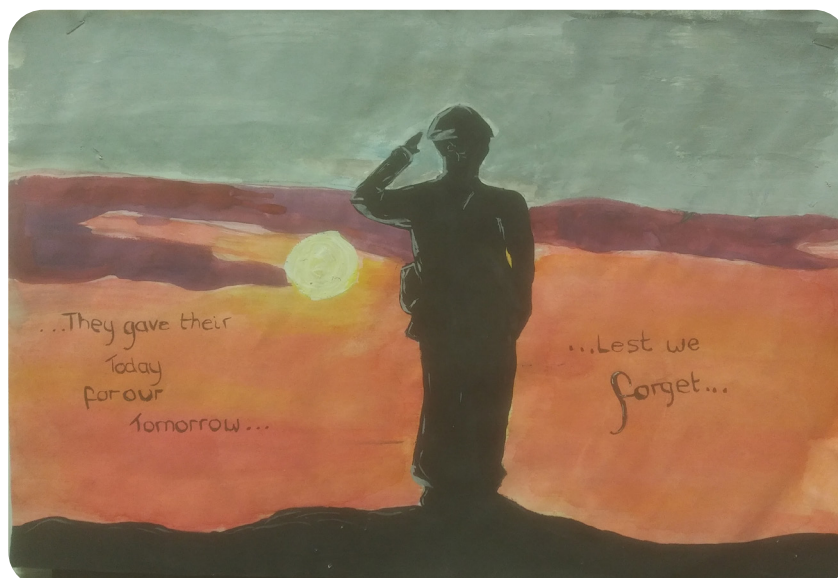


St Mary's Remembers The Fallen

The staff and students of St Mary's gathered on November 11th to remember both those who have died and those who are suffering as a result of conflicts. The focal-point for the service was a field of remembrance in which, during the days leading up to the service, students had planted poppies and crosses.

During the service, GCSE Drama students performed a short piece that showed the challenges faced by those who fought and those who were left at home. Some names of soldiers from around the region were then read out so that they could be remembered. Members of the Sixth Form also delivered readings from the scriptures and the school's Chamber Choir offered a beautiful rendition of 'A Flower Remembered' by John Rutter. Wreaths were laid, flags were lowered, students in their cadet uniforms gave the salute, and a period of silence was impeccably observed. This minute of quiet reflection was broken by 'The Last Post' played by Sam Foster of Year 11 and the service ended with the entire school community vowing to pray and work for a lasting worldwide peace.

We will remember them.



The John Paul II Award

At the start of term, twenty-one Year 12 students signed up to complete the John Paul II Award. This scheme always has great success at St Mary's with many students completing the Gold Award every year. Students from all faith backgrounds are invited to take part and everyone finds it to be a very rewarding experience.

Students are always very dedicated to completing the award and take every opportunity to serve other people both in and out of school. Tasks that students have previously completed to support local parishes have included cleaning candle holders, welcoming visitors to church, serving refreshments, leading children's liturgies and delivering Christmas hampers. In school, students have supported the various services by acting as stewards and one current participant is teaching sign language to other students.

We wish the Year 12 students beginning their journey on the JP II Award this year the very best and look forward to listening to their stories and reflections on where the journey takes them.



Faith in Action Group

Twenty-two Year 7 students have recently enrolled on the Faith in Action Award scheme and they have made an excellent start. The students have identified ways in which they can show service to others and the community and are each working to gain thirty credits. For example, they have supported the collection of hampers for the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle by offering a wrapping service. As part of the award, students also have to keep a journal to record their service to others and any other relevant observations.

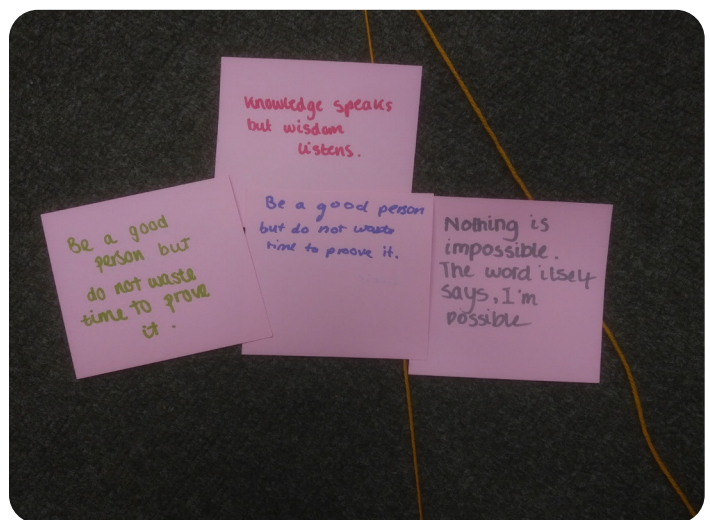
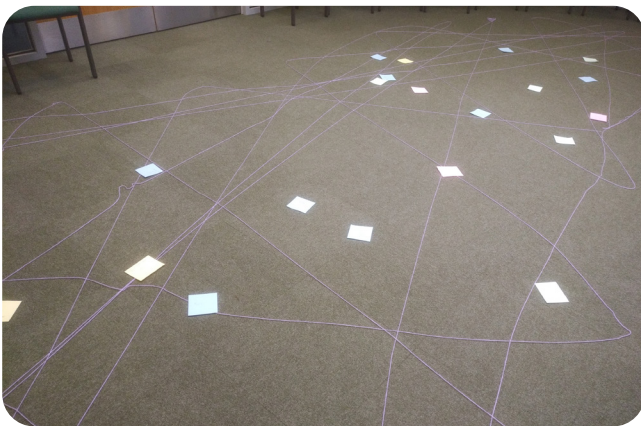
We look forward to hearing all about the excellent service that the group gives to others and to celebrating their achievements.



Morning Prayer

Every morning, a different form group comes to the Chapel for Morning Prayer. This gentle start to the day allows students to look deeply at the relevant theme of the week. In recent weeks, groups have considered looking beyond the surface of an invitation, they have thought about what it means to give service to others, and they have reflected on the COP26 Conference in Glasgow.

During the past fortnight, form groups have created a series of unique webs of wisdom that can be seen on the windows of the Chapel. Each web contains phrases or words of wisdom that are written on individual cards. Students have gone from the Chapel with the challenge of spreading their wisdom to others.



Hamper Collection



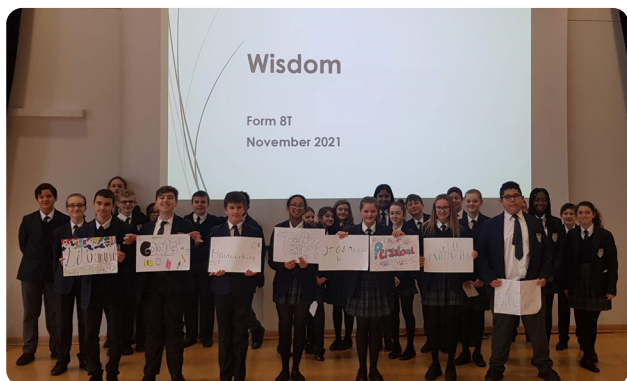
Every year during Advent, form groups are given the task of collecting items for hampers. The hampers are then delivered to the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle to help those in need. This Advent, St Mary's has been as busy as ever with hamper activity. This started with a pastoral lesson that looked at the needs of others and the work done by the charity. Form groups then began collecting items, and each box was wrapped like a gift and contained a Christmas card.

Well done everyone for all your contributions and for your support of the hamper effort this Advent.



Assemblies

Many form group assemblies have taken place this term. These have explored the teaching of St Paul on faith, hope and love, looking at the difference between love and power, the meaning of wisdom, and how we can be part of one large community in which everyone is treated as a unique creation of God. Every member of each tutor group that lead an assembly played an important part in helping others to reflect on the themes.



Weekly Friday Morning Mass

Mass is held in school every Friday morning beginning at 8.20. Each tutor group in turn takes responsibility for leading the service through the readings, bidding prayers and offertory. We are blessed that the priests from local parishes come into school on a weekly rota to celebrate Mass with us.



Liturgies and Christmas Services

Advent this year at St Mary's has the theme of "Do not be afraid." This is taken from the words that the Angel Gabriel spoke when he visited Mary to tell her that she had been chosen by God to give birth to Jesus. Every student in school has attended an Advent Liturgy which has explored the role played by angels in delivering messages from God and how we too can be angels to each other.

Towards the end of term, Christmas services were held to provide everyone in school with an opportunity to listen to some scripture readings as well as to celebrate the gifts and talents of our musical performers. The Chamber Orchestra, the School Choir and some soloists all performed during the services and brought the feel of Christmas ever closer. One of the Christmas services was filmed and this can be viewed on the school's website.



Prayer for Christmas



Loving God,
May the light of Christ break into the lives of
people everywhere,
bringing your joy,
your peace,
your hope and your love,
A song of praise on their lips,
And celebration in their hearts.
Amen.

Year 12 Day of Aspiration

Earlier this term, all the Year 12 students took part in school in a 'Day of Aspiration'. This was an opportunity for students to reflect on the aspirations that they have. The day began with some team-building activities, which allowed tutors to get to know their form groups better. One morning activity involved students writing letters to themselves offering advice and sharing their aspirations. These will be returned to the students at their Leaving Liturgy in Year 13. The afternoon provided some time for the students to reflect on the gifts and talents that we all have and how these can be used for the benefit of others. The day ended with a liturgy in which thanks were given for the experience of that day and God was asked to help us to realise our aspirations.

