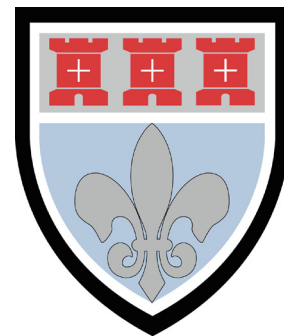


ST MARY'S WORD

Headteacher's introduction



I am delighted to welcome you to our latest edition of St Mary's Word. This 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 complements our school newsletters and Shine bulletins, in celebrating the many God-given gifts and talents of our students.

It is wonderful to see so many students making the most of their gifts and talents to give service to others. It is also fantastic to see students taking part in activities such as the hamper collection and the retreat programme. Our Remembrance Service in November was another highlight, with students showing such reverence when remembering those who 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.

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St Mary's Remembers The Fallen

The staff and students of St Mary's Catholic School gathered together 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 written messages on poppies and laid them on the Atrium stage.

During the service, GCSE Drama students recited the names of soldiers from the local area who had died in wars. Members of the Sixth Form then delivered readings from the scriptures and the school's chamber choir offered a beautiful rendition of 'Listen! Let Your Heart Keep Singing'. 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' and the service ended with the entire school community vowing to pray and work for a lasting worldwide peace.

We will remember them.



Sixth Form Spirituality Leaders

Earlier in the year two Year 12 students were appointed as Sixth Form Spirituality Leaders. These students were Will Metcalf and Ann Joshi. Since their appointment, both students have led a number of activities in school. They led aspects of the Year 7 In-School Retreat by interviewing students and leading the quiz section of the day. They have both led the introduction to the Lenten Liturgies which took place in the Atrium. Ann went on to plan, write and lead the Just-Is Conference Liturgy and Will has worked with Year 12 Form Groups to create a Year 12 book of prayers that can be used during morning registration.

Both students have been a fantastic asset to the spirituality of St Mary's and have set an example to others regarding this area of school life. We look forward to seeing their contributions this year as well as welcoming the new Year 12 Spirituality Leaders.



Christian Union

Christian Union meet every Tuesday lunchtime. The group is led by Josh Sorenson (Year 11) and Louie Caisley (Year 13). Games are played at the start of the session and then a theme from the Bible is explored by looking at particular passages from the Bible and discussing them.

Snacks are shared to round off their time together.



Holocaust Memorial Evening

St Mary's was privileged to be able to host the Holocaust Memorial Evening on 24th January. The theme this year was "Ordinary People" and the guest speaker for the evening was Mrs Noreen Plen who shared her parents' story with us. Our school choir provided two pieces of music for the evening; The Lord hears the cry of the poor by John Foley SJ and Lord Hear my Prayer, Taize. Other students took part in the evening through reading and lighting remembrance candles. The evening was a very moving one and it was fitting that the event ended with everyone saying The Universal Prayer for Peace.

Christmas Services

Towards the end of term, each Year Group gathered as a community for their Christmas Service. Students participated in singing Silent Night and O Come All Ye Faithful. A reading from the Prophet Isaiah was listened to and prayers were said. The service was a lovely way to celebrate all the achievements over the term and wish one another a peaceful and God blessed Christmas.



Hamper Collection



During Advent, each Form Group was tasked with collecting items for Hampers which would be delivered to the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle. There was a great deal of activity during Advent with the gathering of items and it was lovely to see the collection of Hampers grow on the Atrium stage beside the nativity stable.

Around 190 Hampers were collected and delivered. Well done to everyone at St Mary's for their generosity



Christmas Fayres

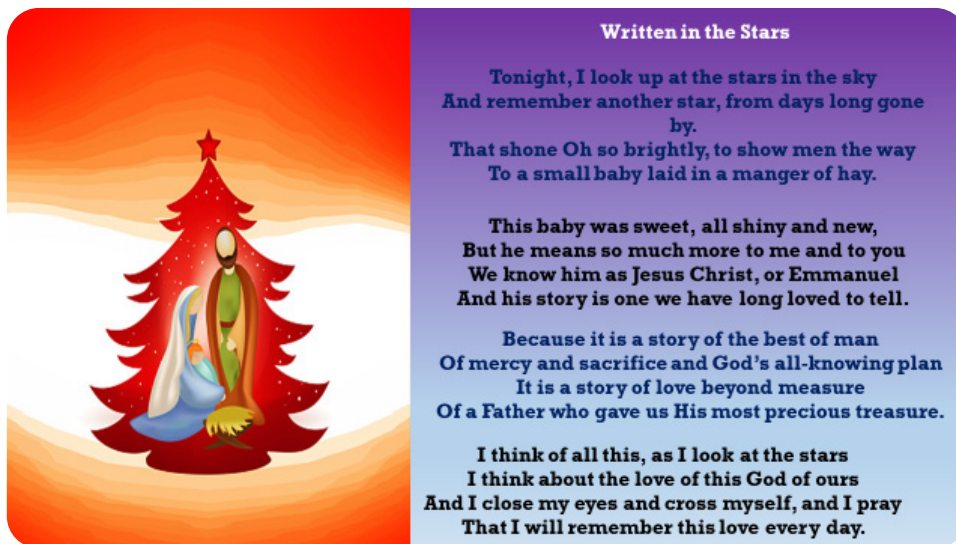
Fundraising was a key feature during Advent at St Mary's. Across one and a half weeks, a fayre took place every lunchtime and was led by different year groups. There was a variety of stalls which had been put together by Form Groups and each stall was a great success. Chocolate, Bubble Tea, Candy Canes to send to others, Guess the name of the Teddy and Guess the person from their Baby Photo were just a few of the stalls on offer. In total, the fundraising raised near to £1800. This is a fantastic amount. Well done to everyone at St Mary's.



Liturgies

Our theme for Advent was "The Star is rising."

During our Advent Liturgies we reflected upon the message of the star in the sky to show the birth of Jesus and how we need to look out for such signs today and respond to them. During the Liturgy, monologues were shown of Sixth Form students providing an insight into what it was like for shepherds out in the fields being visited by a host of angels. The perspectives of Mary and Joseph were also explored. A time of reflection, allowing everyone to offer their own prayers to God brought the Advent Liturgy to a close.



Written in the Stars

**Tonight, I look up at the stars in the sky
And remember another star, from days long gone
by.
That shone Oh so brightly, to show men the way
To a small baby laid in a manger of hay.**

**This baby was sweet, all shiny and new,
But he means so much more to me and to you
We know him as Jesus Christ, or Emmanuel
And his story is one we have long loved to tell.**

**Because it is a story of the best of man
Of mercy and sacrifice and God's all-knowing plan
It is a story of love beyond measure
Of a Father who gave us His most precious treasure.**

**I think of all this, as I look at the stars
I think about the love of this God of ours
And I close my eyes and cross myself, and I pray
That I will remember this love every day.**

Christmas Jumper Day



Sixth Form Students and Staff took part in Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day. It was lovely to see such a variety of Christmas jumpers. In total, £260.00 was raised on this day. Well done to everyone!

CAFOD

This term in the R.E department Year 13 have been studying a faith in action unit, looking at the work of many different charities. The department was thrilled to welcome Mark from CAFOD into school, Mark spoke about the work CAFOD does, and about the many career opportunities CAFOD offer. The talk was a fantastic opportunity for students to ask questions about how CAFOD support the poorest communities and how CAFOD respond to world emergencies. It was great to see so many students interested in getting involved with CAFOD's latest Lenten campaign – The Big Lent Walk.



Year 7 Induction to the Chapel

Last term, Year 7 classes were invited to come to the Chapel during one of their RE lessons. During the session students explored the spiritual life of St Mary's and looked at the various opportunities they could be involved with. Students were also shown St Mary's Memorial Garden and considered its importance for the school. Students explored the school Chapel and reflected on how the space could be used effectively and the meaning of the internal features found within it.



Year 7 Retreat

On Wednesday 7th December, Year 7 set off on their first ever retreat. We headed to Emmaus Youth Village in Consett and arrived in the very cold countryside! The theme of the trip was 'The Adventures of St Paul' and we engaged in lots of interesting activities relating to the theme. On our first night, we played lots of fun ice-breakers and ended the night with evening prayer, before returning to our chalet for snacks and in Miss McGuire's chalet, lots of Wednesday episodes on Netflix!

We woke early on the next day to a blanket of snow so we wrapped up and headed out into the cold! We spent the morning completing an activity carousel of a mixture of craft and team activities. After lunch, we took part in the 'Big Debate', discussing lots of topics including global warming, the difference we can make to the world and even deciding whether McDonalds is superior to KFC! We then played a giant game of 'Capture the Flag' outside. After warming up in the chalets, we had our evening meal and then participated in escape rooms and ended the busy day with prayer.

For our final day, we walked in the countryside and reflected on our theme. The walk was very cold (below freezing for all of our trip!) so we wrapped up warm and headed out. We then participated in creative activities, creating a stone to represent our stay to leave at YMT for their beautiful outdoor display. We then took part in our final Mass with Brother John. This left us feeling calm and relaxed and ready to return to our busy lives!

Miss McGuire



Trip to Lindisfarne Gospels

On Wednesday October 12th a group of 27 Year 8 students visited the Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery in the centre of Newcastle on a visit organised by the RE department. The Lindisfarne Gospels book is one of the most valuable artefacts in Britain today, usually housed at the British Library in London. The book is periodically displayed in the North East, where it was originally created approximately 1300 years ago on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. The book represents the golden age of craftsmanship and design in Northumbria and has survived in almost perfect condition for over one thousand years through many turbulent times in British history.

After a short Metro journey into town, our students were given a guided tour of the Gospels Exhibition, beginning with an excellent immersive film experience taking students back to the time when the Gospels were made. This also recounted the story of how the Gospels were almost lost forever at the bottom of the sea, only to be miraculously saved in what some believe was an act of divine intervention, adding to the mystique of this amazing relic. Then, the students were taken on a guided tour to view the Gospels themselves, as well as other associated items recounting the development of religious belief and spirituality in this country and beyond. Our guide Kevin then invited students to take time in an adjacent room to explore the spiritually inspired art from across the centuries to get students to consider their place in the world and their own sense of spirituality.

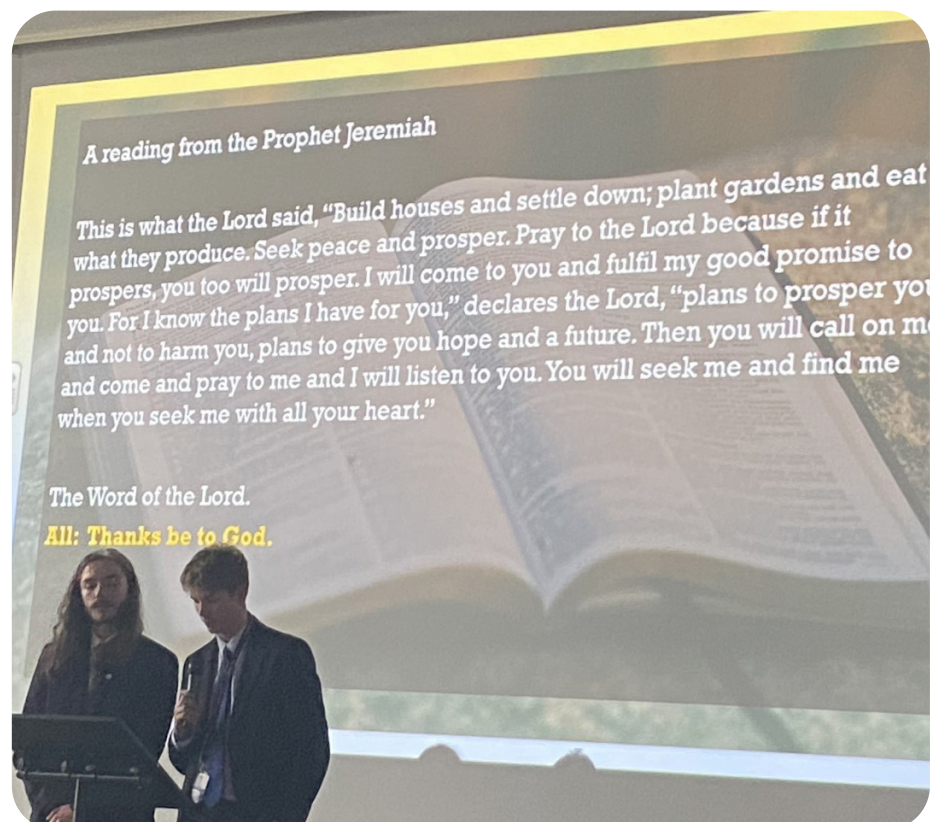
From there, our students were taken to the top floor of Newcastle Central Library to engage in activities related to storytelling and how stories from Beowulf to Harry Potter can teach us about creativity, imagination and how humanity has developed its rich narratives over time. Year 8 greatly enjoyed the activities the Laing learning team put together for them. Students learnt the importance of oral history as a foundation for modern belief and how such stories continue to be communicated to people from around the world.

Mr O'Connell and Miss Spratt were extremely impressed by each student's enthusiasm and the way they participated in the activities during the visit. Gallery staff commended students on how engaged and thoughtful they were about the Exhibition. All students behaved impeccably and were a great credit to St Mary's Catholic School.



Year 12 Day of Aspiration

Last term, all Year 12 students took part in a Day of Aspiration with the theme of Significance. The purpose of the day was to allow students to come together as one community and reflect upon their aspirations for the future. The day included a variety of activities such as choosing their most inspiring person and presenting their choices to the rest of the group. There was also the opportunity to reflect on what passions they have, what they feel the world needs and what their own personal strengths are. Taking all this into consideration, the students were then asked to find the common threads and through this they could discover their significance in the world.



Prayer

Lord, you are the wind in my sails.
You guide me as I steer and find direction.
You give me the strength to keep on going.
You watch over me as I navigate stormy seas.
You are the harbour where I stop for rest.
You are my encourager when I lost hope.
You are the lighthouse that keeps my path safe.
You are with me always.
Amen.

