



St Mary's Catholic School

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where everyone can succeed



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RE: The Catholic Life and development of Spirituality at St Mary's

26th May 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope this letter finds you well. I would like to share with you an update of all of the wonderful work students have been doing as part of the Catholic Life at St Mary's. The spiritual life of our school is a vibrant aspect of school life, in which all of our students thrive. We are so proud of the way in which our students participate and lead this area, with commitment, enthusiasm and positivity.

Each day in school, all students are provided with opportunities to develop their own faith and encounter God. This is done through our weekly Thoughts and Prayers which are shared across the school by our Spirituality Team. If you would like to see some of examples of our Thoughts and Prayers, they are available on our school website. As well as prayer in the Form Room, each morning a Form Group comes to the Chapel for Morning Prayer, which is led by a member of the Spirituality Team. In addition, our students continue to enjoy their weekly assemblies based on the theme of the week. At key points in the year, we continue to celebrate liturgies and reflections as a whole school. We are really looking forward to our end of year Mass, which is always an amazing celebration. During this event, we pray and reflect using drama, dance, music, videos and prayers in the many different languages represented in our school community.

At St Mary's we offer a range of extra-curricular groups and awards for students to take part in. The Faith in Action Award is offered to Year 7 and 8 students and next year we will be offering it to Year 9 students. Year 12 students are encouraged to complete the Pope John Paul II Award. This year we have had 14 Year 13 students complete the award achieving either Silver or Gold. Both awards allow students to receive recognition for their acts of kindness and compassion inside and outside of the school community, putting their faith into action and making a positive difference in the world. We also encourage students to be leaders in this area of school life whether this be through leading an actual group such as the Christian Union or whether it be through helping with the planning and delivery of fundraising events, liturgies and Masses through the year.

Earlier in the academic year students were very generous in their donations for our Hamper appeal. Over 200 Hampers were delivered to the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle. Each Hamper was wrapped as a gift and included a message inside from the Form Groups who had made the Hampers. These donations were gratefully received by various families and is a clear example of our students putting faith into action. Fundraising has also been a key feature of the Catholic Life at St Mary's. Fayres took place during Advent and Lent during lunchtimes to raise money for various charities. In total students at St Mary's raised over £2200. The charities that received their donations were very grateful not only for the funds but also for being kept in our thoughts.

Each year, Year 7 and 8 students are given the opportunity to attend a retreat and Year 9 students are offered the opportunity to attend the Summer Festival. This year we are taking 48 Year 9 students to the Summer Festival. Both of these events take place at the Emmaus Youth Village, Consett. This year all of our retreats have been oversubscribed and students have thoroughly enjoyed these opportunities to develop their faith in a different way. At the start of Year 12, students took part in a Day of Aspiration which was held in school and explored the aspirations our young people have for their future and how their faith can support them along their journey.

I hope from this summary you can see the vibrancy of this aspect of school life. Attached with this letter, is our most recent edition of [St Mary's Word](#), which is our newsletter dedicated to the Spiritual and Catholic Life of the school. The



newsletter and other information can be found on the school website. In addition, please keep an eye on our St Mary's Twitter account, as we are always sharing all of the fantastic work of our students.

Thank you so much for your support of the Catholic life of St Mary's.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Blackburn
Assistant Headteacher – Catholic Life

