

## Message from the Director

We have so much good news to share with you this year that we can't fit it all into our annual newsletter. In extending our suite of programmes and our cycle of care we are grateful to acknowledge that we are blessed in our diocese with so many young people and young adults eager to enjoy, develop, share and celebrate their faith together.

Pope Francis wants a Church that does not passively wait for people to come to it. He wants us to step out of our comfort zones and go to those who do not know the saving love of Christ. With this in mind we are thankful for our workers and volunteers as they strive to walk ever closer with Jesus so that Christ's light might shine more powerfully through them as they support our young people to know the saving love of Christ.

We are thankful also for the support of our Bishops and our Priests who have supported us in their prayers, helped us to plan activities and events, helped deliver parish programmes, adjusted and extended rotas to accommodate our PJPII Award students and celebrated Masses to commission and celebrate our youth.

Finally we are thankful for your on-going support through our annual collection (17th/18th January 2015) and I ask that you continue to remember us and our work in your prayers in the coming year. I invite you to visit our Facebook page and our website for more information.

**Pauline Dowd, Director**



### Upcoming Events

#### **JANUARY**

- 5<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> Youth Alpha
- 13<sup>th</sup> Parish GIFT 1
- 17<sup>th</sup> DCF Music Ministry Day - Duneane Parish
- 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> Living Youth Annual Church Collection
- 30<sup>th</sup> Youth Alpha Residential

#### **FEBRUARY**

- 5<sup>th</sup> PJPII Awards Ceremony
- 11<sup>th</sup> SVP Youth Workshop Day
- 18<sup>th</sup> Parish GIFT 2

#### **MARCH**

- 21<sup>st</sup> Parish GIFT Leaders Retreat Day
- 25<sup>th</sup> Bobbio Pilgrimage Formation Evening
- 29<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday Youth Gathering

#### **APRIL**

- 17<sup>th</sup> Habitat Gala Ball
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Bobbio Pilgrimage Evening
- 25<sup>th</sup> DCF Music Ministry Day - Belfast

#### **MAY**

- 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Youth Alpha Leadership Conference
- week 3 Habitat for Humanity Formation
- 26<sup>th</sup> PJPII Award Leader Training

#### **JUNE**

- 6<sup>th</sup> Parish GIFT 1 & 2 Celebration Day
- 20<sup>th</sup> St Columbanus Youth Celebration
- 24<sup>th</sup> Bobbio Pilgrimage Evening

#### **JULY**

- 4<sup>th</sup> Bobbio Pilgrimage Leaders' Away Day
- 20<sup>th</sup> Habitat for Humanity Team - Ethiopia
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Summer Pilgrimage Family Mass

#### **AUGUST**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer Pilgrimage Bobbio, Italy
- 10<sup>th</sup> Summer Pilgrimage Evaluation
- 26<sup>th</sup> Summer Pilgrimage Reunion 1

### Youth Alpha Programme

Since its launch at the Faith & Life Convention in September we have had more than 80 young people and young adults involved on the Youth Alpha Programme in four centres across the Diocese including Living Youth; the Parish of Maghera, Newcastle; the Parish of St Colmcille's, Ballyhackamore and St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena. The weekly sessions run at the same time in each centre and we had the pleasure of hosting all 4 groups at Living Youth for session 4 at the end of November. Conor's ice-breakers and Kiera's meditation were well received and topped and tailed a very powerful evening.

For each session we come together to eat, socialise, play games and then we move into our small groups to consider one of the Youth Alpha Programme Topics which include: Who is Jesus? Why did He die? What is faith? How and why do we pray? Reading the Bible, the Holy Spirit, evil, healing and telling others about the Church.

Three further sessions will run in January followed by a weekend residential at Corrymeela. On residential the young people will have the opportunity to discuss, explore and develop their faith, to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to plan the next steps on the journey they



have begun with us on the Youth Alpha Programme.

Many thanks to those groups and individuals who sponsored food and snacks, bibles or transport.

## GIFT Programme in Down & Connor



The Parish GIFT suite of programmes gives young people a positive experience of faith and parish, through fun activities, engaging themes, song and prayer. Coordinators and leaders from 38 parishes in Down and Connor have now been trained to deliver the Parish GIFT 1 programme in their parishes. A big thank you to the Newcastle Parish GIFT team who led the 3 training sessions in Newcastle.

Our GIFT 1 programme is parish based and proved to be a huge success with our year 8 children. The popularity of the programme culminated in a Diocesan Celebration Day in Newcastle, in June, where more than 250 children and leaders enjoyed a BBQ, treasure hunt, music, games, sports, ice-cream and a final Mass with Bishop Treanor.

Feedback from those involved in the pilot review has been very positive with many more parishes requesting training and support this year. We are now also working with other organisations including the Irish Bishops Drugs Initiative to consider including additional modules and activities that will stretch our children further while supporting the development of their faith.

We are also delighted to announce that Parish GIFT 2 will be launched for the Lenten season 2015. This programme is for our year 9 children, particularly those who were involved in Parish GIFT 1 and wish to continue their faith journey through GIFT. If you are interested in volunteering to help with GIFT in your parish or you would like your child to get involved, please contact Living Youth.

## Living Youth Summer Pilgrimage, Rome 2014

A group of 44 young people and leaders went on pilgrimage from Living Youth to Rome in August 2014. They enjoyed a five day non-stop journey through history, culture and faith in the eternal city. The group stayed at the beautiful Irish College and enjoyed the hospitality and assistance of the team there.

The itinerary included Santa Croce, the Vatican, St. Peter's Basilica, St. John Lateran's Basilica, the Piazza Navona, the Colosseum, the Spanish Steps, the Holy Steps, St. Paul's outside the Walls and the Catacombs.

Each day began with prayer led by Brendan and Andrew, each afternoon included time by the pool and then Mass and each evening finished with prayer organised and led by the young people. The Rome pilgrimage was an unforgettable experience for all the pilgrims, lifelong friendships were formed, faith was shared, developed and celebrated and the feedback from pilgrims and parents was brilliant. Roll on next year!



*"The Rome Pilgrimage was the best time of my life. I got to make loads of new friends, some of whom are now my best friends but I also learned a lot about the Catholic way of living and my faith has become stronger." Mark*

*"The Rome pilgrimage was a truly amazing and life enriching experience from start to finish. It gave me a deeper understanding of my faith, brought me closer to God and allowed me to meet new friends. I absolutely loved it." Shannon*



*"The pilgrimage was one of the best times of my life! I made so many new friends in Rome and they will always hold a special place in my heart. I personally feel Rome deepened my faith and helped me learn a lot more about it. Rome 2014 - one to be remembered!" Anna*

*"Rome gave me the opportunity to meet new, life-long, friends and also allowed me to explore my faith on a much deeper level which I don't often give myself the time to do back home." Cara*

### Pope John Paul II Award

The Pope John Paul II Award gives young people the opportunity to volunteer in their parish, community and school, to be nourished in faith, to become more active members of their Church, to meet other young people, to have fun, to challenge themselves and to use and develop their talents and skills. Forty schools and parishes are now involved in the Award in Down and Connor, more than 200 young people will receive the Award in February and we have recently recruited 370 young people onto the first year.

Commitment to the Award is for sixteen months, during which time, each young person registers twenty activities in their parish and twenty activities in their community and school or with a charitable or social justice organisation. Young people finish by writing a final summary, or by attending the Living Youth Workshop Day. This year more than 60 young people and their leaders attended the Workshop Day, completed their write-up, shared pizza, talked about their faith and then joined Fr. Raymond McCullagh for Mass. Our Award Ceremony this year will be on 5th February 2015 in St. Mary's Church, Belfast.

### Papal Cross Award

More than 20 of our Young Adults are currently taking part in the Papal Cross Award. As role models they are dedicated to volunteering within their parishes and communities. They are involved in assisting with activities such as the Parish GIFT Programme, Youth Alpha, school retreats, after schools clubs, music ministry and reading at Mass and we are delighted to have their help here at Living Youth, at our various youth events.

As part of the Award, our young adults are currently volunteering for 26 activities in their parishes where they will develop their own faith and that of others. They are also volunteering for 26 activities in a Social Awareness setting in which their enthusiastic and energetic personalities have already brought

hope and support as they bring various project to life. To complete the Award our young adults will do a project in which they will take responsibility for developing an activity which will benefit either their Parish or their local community.

If you are 18-25 and interested in signing up for the Papal Cross Award, please contact Living Youth.



### Living Youth Habitat for Humanity Team

In the summer of 2014, 18 young people from Down & Connor travelled to Ethiopia to participate in a Living Youth Habitat for Humanity Project, accompanied by Fr. Raymond McCullagh, one of the members of the Youth Commission and a Habitat supporter for more than 10 years.



After a challenging fundraising campaign, the volunteers travelled to the host village in the heart of the country, where they were based for nearly 2 weeks, to build new homes for members of the community. Anna McAreavey, who was one of the team leaders, shares her thoughts:

"Working closely with the families who are going to own the houses is truly special. You get to build a close relationship and find out what a house means to them. Many of the families live in appalling conditions, often with no water or sanitation facilities. They feel truly blessed to have received a Habitat house and you can see from their smiles just how much it means to them. The experience is one I will never forget."

If you are over 18 and would like to be part of our Habitat team, travelling to Ethiopia this summer, please contact Living Youth.

*Living Youth Summer Pilgrimage*

## ITALY

*2nd-7th August 2015*

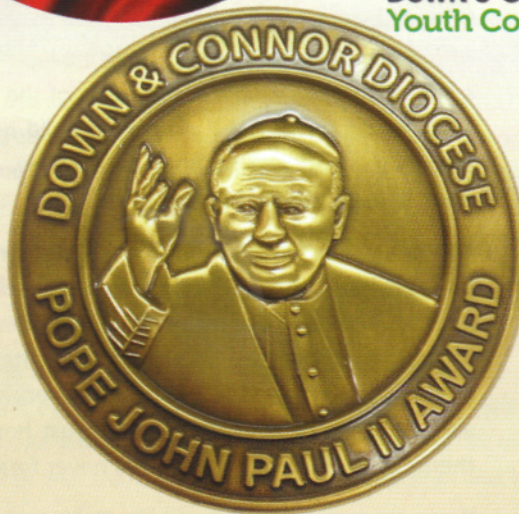
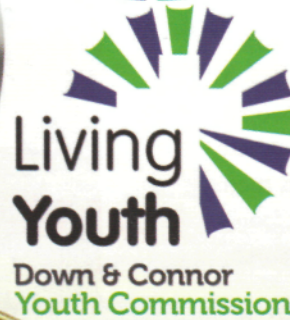


*Aged 17 - 23?*

*Following in the footsteps of St Columbanus to  
Milan, Piacenza, Bergama and Bobbio*

**Price: £690**

*Applications from [www.livingyouthni.org](http://www.livingyouthni.org)  
Closing Date for applications 29th January*



### Living Youth Staff Team

Living Youth are delighted to welcome our new Youth Ministry Worker Kiera O'Neill onto the staff team. Kiera joined Living Youth in September and is originally from Omagh, Co. Tyrone. She studied a BEd in Secondary Religious Studies at St. Mary's University College, Belfast and after graduating she pursued careers in both retreat facilitation and teaching RE. She returned to Belfast from Liverpool in August and is now an integral part of the busy Living Youth team which also includes Pauline, Conor and Claire.



Pictured Left to Right: Kiera, Pauline, Conor, Claire