

A Hopeful Community: Where Pizza Meets Prayer!

by Freddie G, SJP School.

A true rock of my month for the last two years, the faith-filled, hopeful Youth Mass at Brentwood Cathedral is a radiant, loud, and joyful celebration of faith and community, perfectly uniting young people from across schools and year groups in faith: breaking barriers by building friendships. In this monthly Youth Service-led Mass, Christ's presence is felt in every smile, every hymn, and every prayer. With opportunities to meet and speak with some excellent, always inviting priests, to read, altar serve, or play an instrument in the uplifting, energetic choir, this Mass truly brings faith to life. If this spiritual nourishment does not sound like enough to you, Domino's Pizza is served for all before Mass begins! And even this lesser-liturgical part of the marvellous Mass is rooted deeply in the Catholic Social Teaching of solidarity and community, also holy in nature from how it embodies Jesus' lesson from the Last Supper: to break bread and share in fellowship as one body in Christ; as we gather on the first Thursday of every month, for food, for faith, for friendship, I am reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

On top of its warming welcome, the Youth Mass continues to nurture faith through an ever-evolving variety of experiences and activities that reflect the Catholic Social Teaching principles of participation, dignity, and the common good; so, this monthly-repeating Mass never feels stagnant. I have had so many different opportunities: to receive Reconciliation, to write prayer intentions with the BCYS youth leaders, to spend valuable, faith-building time in Eucharistic Adoration, and to share in countless other moments like these, of reflection and renewal. My most treasured memory of this mesmerising monthly Mass, however, was during our recent Jubilee Mass, which was an unforgettable, yet humble, celebration within this Year of Hope as over 300 students gathered as a one people of faith in the beautiful Cathedral, united in the Holy Spirit, worshipping alongside the welcoming Bishop Alan, to listen to an awe-inspiring talk by the mother of Donal Walsh, the Irish-born Catholic who, despite losing his life to cancer at just 16, never lost faith or hope. Donal's powerful message to not just live but love life no matter the situations we are in resonates deeply with the mission of Youth Mass itself: to remind us that faith is never static but living, active, and joy filled, providing a true sense of hope that the faith will go on, with us as its preservers.

Above all, the BCYS' magnificent Youth Mass stands strong as a pillar of faith, as a pillar of hope, as a true reflection of what it means to be a fruitful, loving, reliable Catholic community... a community that welcomes, a community that uplifts, a community that empowers every person to share their gifts. It is a monthly reminder that faith is not confined to ritual, but flows through laughter, music, and shared experience and because of the beauty I get to experience monthly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who make this inspiring celebration possible, and I warmly invite everyone to come along and be part of the magnificent, blissful art that is Youth Mass, as once you experience the joy, the unity, and the living hope that radiates from Youth Mass, your eyes will be opened, your hearts set ablaze, and a yearning to return will form as a part of you! Youth Mass: food, friendship, faith.

