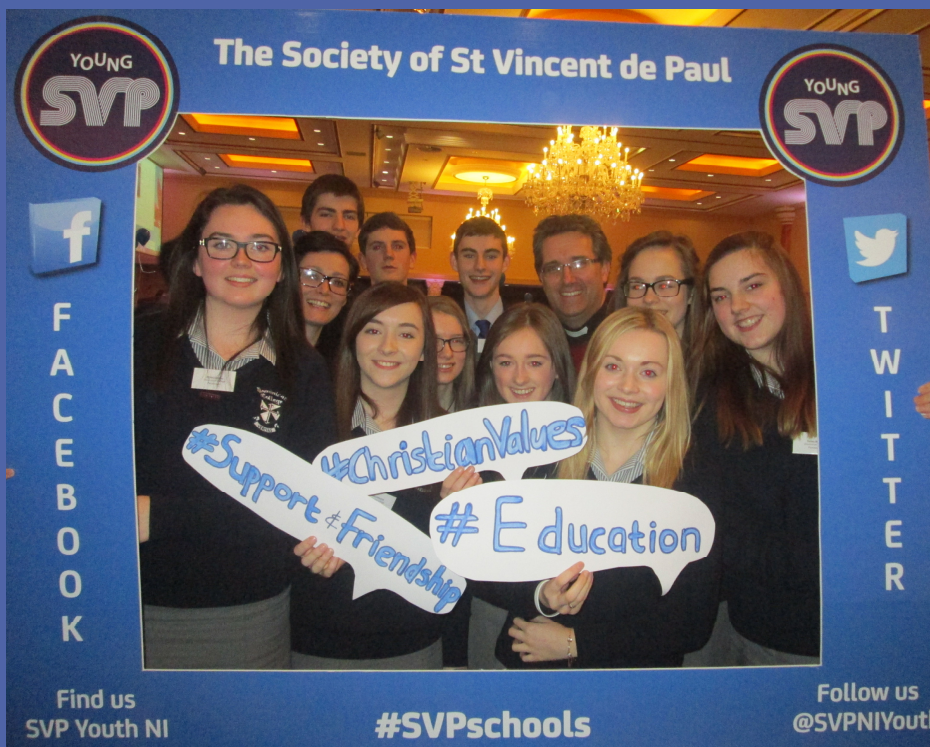




Volume 2; Issue 2

# SVP Youth Newsletter

## ANNUAL YOUTH DAY 2015



In this Issue:

- Christmas time Projects
- Annual Youth Day
- An Inside look at SVP at University
- Lenten Reflection
- Millennium Volunteers Programme
- Summer Camps to come...

Dominican College, Portstewart with Fr. Raymond!

# EDITORIAL

BY GEMMA BROLLY - SVP YOUTH PRESIDENT  
Northern Region



Hey all,

I hope our first magazine of 2015 finds you all healthy and happy! With a new year often comes new energy, which you will see plenty of within these pages! This is only a snippet of evidence of all the effort and work you have put in recently, contributing to the ongoing and invaluable work of the Society.

The highlight of our year so far, has to be the Regional Youth Day held on 11<sup>th</sup> February, in Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena. I actually had the privilege of attending this fantastic event for the first time and I have to admit I was overwhelmed by the positivity and energy of everyone that day. It was wonderful to see so many faces, hear so many thoughts and ideas and converse with pupils from all over the North. I hope everyone found it as fulfilling as I did!

As both Fr. Raymond and John McAreavey indicated, our faith is central to the work we do, it is what binds us, what fulfils us and in darker days, it is often this which carries us through. In such difficult times as these, we must hold firm to our faith and follow our calling. Something which has consistently reminded me of the everyday trials and gifts of our faith in this Lenten period, is reading the Lenten Reflections of a friend. As part of her Lenten promise, Sarah committed herself to posting a photo and written reflection on a title related to our faith, as part of the 'Instagram Lenten Photo-a-day Journey' on facebook, each day of Lent. I have found these of great support and food for thought, so much so that I have chosen three of my favourites so far, to include in this issue for your own enjoyment! I hope you find them as inspirational as I have.

In his most recent message for the 30th World Youth Day, (which will be celebrated around the world on Palm Sunday) Pope Francis advised "You will discover that God can be 'seen' (also) in the face of your brothers and sisters, especially those who are most forgotten: the poor, the hungry, those who thirst, strangers, the sick, those imprisoned (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Have you ever had this experience?" Our Society invites you to help one another, remembering those who are forgotten, and to share these experiences, to "be the change."

Finally, wishing you every success in the year ahead, in your studies and in every aspect of your lives, I leave you with the words of Pope Francis himself: "Have the courage to be happy."

God bless,  
Gemma

## CONTENTS...

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Page 1      | Editorial                             |
| Page 2      | Fr. McCullagh                         |
| Pages 3-4   | Christmas Projects                    |
| Pages 5-6   | Annual Youth Day                      |
| Page 7      | Michaela Foundation                   |
| Page 8      | Life at QUB with SVP                  |
| Page 9      | St. Louise's Girls go the Extra Mile! |
| Page 10     | Living Youth                          |
| Page 11     | MV Programme                          |
| Page 12     | Conference Corner                     |
| Pages 13-14 | Lenten Photo Challenge                |
| Page 15     | Camp Vincent 2015                     |



# St Patrick's Day Party with a Difference!

By Father Raymond McCullagh,  
Spiritual Director for SVP Youth

On the evening of Saint Patrick's Day I attended a Peace Party in Belfast, aimed at inspiring a new generation of peacemakers. It was part of a series of events around peace and reconciliation over the last number of years. The Peace Party gathered together some 200 young adults of faith (16-30 year olds) from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds to build their confidence and encourage the role that they can play in shaping our community and culture. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, was a special guest and reminded us that our true identity is found in Christ who calls all of us to work for reconciliation. The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nichola Mallon, also spoke powerfully about her faith and the role of politics in building peace. The evening also consisted of music and worship weaved between the talks and finished with a symbolic act of prayer at Belfast City Hall. There we prayed for God's blessing on our towns and cities and throughout our land.

St Patrick's Peace Party contrasted with the political backdrop of disagreement over welfare reform and less than harmonious relations between the folks on the Hill - and I'm not talking about Slemish! Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness stayed at home this St Patrick's Day rather than travel State side to try and sort out their differences. Maybe it's just a further reminder that working for peace is not always a party; it can sometimes seem like a war between parties! We have come a long way but there is still a long way to go.

St Patrick, whom we honour as our Father in faith, knew the joys and struggles of being a peacemaker and friend of the poor. His life story was full of ups and downs. Imagine as a young boy, being captured by pirates and finding himself looking after sheep on a cold wet Irish hillside. But rather than descending into self-pity he digs deep and prays frequently to the God whom his parents talked about. Now he was discovering for himself that God was real. In time Patrick would escape and later hear the cry of the Irish calling him back. A nation would come to faith because he was faithful.

Patrick's story is similar to our peace process - one of challenge and troubles -but he persevered. He didn't become bitter. He decided to make a change in his life and his decision to stick by his beliefs eventually bore fruit. I think his story speaks to the very heart of all Irish people especially those enduring hardship. Financial strife and recession can so easily take away our hope but it is precisely at these low points that we need to believe in the power of Jesus to transform and renew, to bring true and lasting peace. Jesus sent his first disciples out as peacemakers but he knew that life would not always be easy or straightforward. And that's precisely when we need to dig deep and put God's words into action.

For many years the St Vincent de Paul Society has been doing just that and has built up a positive reputation for good, helping the poor to prosper again. We remember with affection those members of the Society who have sacrificed so much for others and passed on their good example. Like St Patrick their endurance allowed the seeds of faith to reach their full potential.

I really enjoyed St Patrick's Peace Party - probably quite different from other St Patrick's Day celebrations. We were reminded of that as we walked through the streets of Belfast and watched party revelers and even fellow citizens waging a flag protest at the City Hall. There is still so much work to be done! But I really believe that our young people are up for the challenge. The encouraging and enthusiastic participation of so many at our recent SVP Youth Day was a source of tremendous hope and bodes well for the future of the Society. Just as the young Patrick heard the call of the Irish almost 1600 years ago so our young people are being called to rise up as a new generation, free from history's baggage and filled with hope. Ultimately it's not what we do that counts but what God does through us. So let's pray that more young people may hear the call to be peacemakers and friends of the poor, people who are willing to put their faith in action and make a lasting difference. We use the words of St Patrick himself, relying on God to bind us all together in the work of charity.

*I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity  
By invocation of the same, the three in one and one in three.  
Of whom all nature hath creation, Eternal Father, Spirit, Word.  
Praise to the Lord of my salvation - salvation is of Christ the Lord.*

# CHRISTMAS TIME



YOUTH CONFERENCES AT WORK!



Well done to St. Malachy's HS, Castlewellan who donated 110 Hampers to the Castlewellan, Kilcoo & Leitrim Areas! Jim, Morgan from the local SVP is pictured collecting the Hampers. Thanks!

A big thank you to Regent House Grammar, Newtownards for donating over 30 hampers to the local SVP! This was also their first Hamper Appeal! Thanks!



Another Fantastic effort from Dominican College Fortwilliam with their Toy & Hamper Appeal.

Included in the picture is Mrs. Niblock (Teacher) and Brian Boyle (SVP). Thanks again!



A BIG thank you to the Our Lady & St. Patrick's Conference, Knock who came over to Regional Office to pack toys for the Family Appeal! Well done!



Well done to Our Lady of Lourdes HS, Ballymoney for the generous donation to the Hamper Appeal! This is their second appeal and they have also tripled their Conference numbers too! Thanks!



A huge thank you to everyone for supporting the SVP Hamper Appeal this year, St Catherine's College managed to donate 73 Food Hampers, 10 presents for adults and children and £172.67!! Congratulations to 10C for raising the money through their bun sale and 9L who managed to donate 5 hampers from their form class alone!

### St. Colman's College, Newry

- The School's Choir has raised £1000 for our local Conference via a beautiful concert in Newry Cathedral (Music Department)
- The Mini Enterprise Group has decided to donate money to SVP
- 3 Hampers were donated by parents of our Youth Conference & were raffled pre-Christmas
- One of our Youth Conference volunteers Ronan McGibbon dressed up as a blue Santa and participated in Newry Chamber of Commerce's Annual Charity Santa Run raising money in the process
- They also organised a 3k Cross Country sponsored run for staff and pupils on Wednesday 17th December which I was very privileged to witness!
- The Conference also helped to sort & transport donated toys from Annual Newry City Business Christmas Charity Dinner to SVP Offices



# ANNUAL YOUTH DAY

BY CLAIRE MORGAN

The Annual Youth Day took place on Wednesday 11th February at the Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena. This year, the event was the biggest Youth Day we have had to date with 20 schools attending which meant over 400 people on the day!

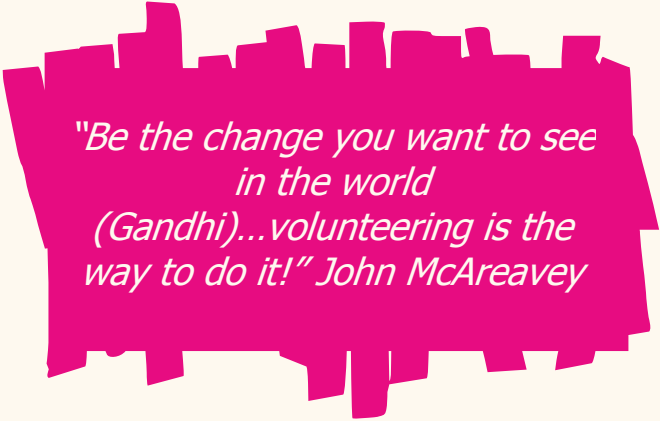
After last year's success, we wanted to build on this and make the day more interactive and to have more space, so our location was perfect! Schools came from all over the region and we were also very privileged to have St. Anthony's Conference from Queen's University attend and help out on the day.

Once again, the day started with our Young Vincentians setting up their exhibition, as latter in the day they were going to get a chance to inform everyone about the fantastic projects they have been involved in such as food hampers, homework clubs, Santa Run's, Welcome Lunches for Year 8s, Visitation to Elderly homes to name a few! After all schools arrived, Grainne Lee (Northern Region Youth Rep) and I welcomed everyone to the Tullyglass.

We were also very humbled to have Fr. Raymond McCullagh (Spiritual Director for SVP Youth) to begin the day with a beautiful reflection and of course one of his famous action songs about Noah's Ark! Once we all caught our breath

after Fr. Ray's song, we were also very privileged to hear John McAreavey from The Michaela Foundation give a wonderful speech on the importance of volunteering and faith today.

After our session of reflection, the 'organised chaos' began with an activity hunt during the exhibition. It was exhilarating to watch over 350



*"Be the change you want to see in the world (Gandhi)...volunteering is the way to do it!" John McAreavey*

young people informing SVP members & guests about their projects, enquiring about SVP and other organisations all at once.

At this stage, I decided to tune into each school's exhibition. Honestly, I was blown away by the amazing effort each young person and school puts into their SVP work and life as a young Vincentian!

As previously mentioned, we tried to make this year more interactive. During the Activity Hunt, each young person had the opportunity to visit our **Social Justice Tree**, whereby they hung a leaf with a message of hope for

Social Justice for the future. Secondly, as all schools are interviewed about their projects, we decided to make it more youth friendly by setting up an inflatable **Video Booth**, which had a long queue throughout the day! Thirdly, we had a **Wall of Positivity**, where each attendee could write positive message on a fake brick and build a wall of hope throughout the day! Lastly, we had a **SVP Selfie Booth** (pictures to follow). This was a great way to tune into our youth generation by communicating in a way that they know best! And our Twitter account went mad for the next week!

The day came to an end with lunch, which always goes down well, and a few thank yous! I could not be happier with how the Youth Day went this year! The overall feedback from pupils, SVP members, guests and teachers was great and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you to all of those who attended and also to those schools who could not attend, as we also appreciate your continual commitment to SVP throughout the year! Finally, as this year the Youth Day was more personal for me as I have had the opportunity to meet quite a few of the young people involved, especially during Camp Vincent, to be able to see you all again was great! Thank you all again.

# Annual Youth Day Pictures...



Catherine-Ann Traynor, John McAreavey, Micheal Rooney & Claire Morgan



St. Malachy's HS Conference, Castlewellan



Loreto Grammar School Conference, Omagh



St. Colman's College Conference, Newry



St. Dominic's Grammar Conference, West Belfast



St. Louise's Comprehensive College, West Belfast



St. Mary's CBS Grammar Conference, West Belfast



St. Patrick's Grammar Conference, Downpatrick



Thornhill College Conference, Derry City



Dominican College Conference, Portstewart

## "Life Really Can Be Without Limits!"

By Claire Morgan

The Michaela Foundation began in 2012 as a tribute to the life of Michaela McAreavey (nee Harte). The Michaela Foundation's Core Values are to promote Irish identity, faith, fun, well-being and fashion, as they quote, "We want every young person to feel loved and see how beautiful they truly are." When you actually examine this quote, it really is an amazing statement to make, as growing up today in 21<sup>st</sup> Century is not easy for young people today, especially as young people at times can get bad press. However, here we have an organisation who wants to nurture each young person they encounter to make them realise that life truly can be without limits!

I first met with John McAreavey, Director of MF and Úna Kelly, Operations Manager back in September 2014. After the meeting, I came away on a high for many reasons. Firstly, John and Úna both had a lovely positive attitude for their work and more importantly for the young people they work for and with. Secondly, both our organisations are different in some ways, but our Youth Programme has similarities in what they are trying to achieve – the development of young people. After this meeting, I knew they would be perfect for us to work with!

Before I met the Michaela Foundation, I heard about all the wonderful work



of their summer camps! I immediately signed up to their Facebook page and viewed all their videos and pictures of all the various camps going on across Ireland. Honestly, it gave me such inspiration for our own Camp Vincent and how we could further engage with our young Vincentians. Later in the year, I was helping out our Queen's University Conference at the Fresher's Fair and I was very humbled to meet a few of their Scholars from their Student Awards Scheme. I listened to how their experiences through volunteering with the Michaela Foundation gave them experiences they would never have had otherwise. These two programmes give young girls and young adults fantastic opportunities to develop their faith, life experience, well-being and to generally have fun!



This year, SVP had the pleasure of Úna, Aoife and Coaimhe from the Foundation attend our Annual Youth Day 2015. They held a fantastic stall where they interacted with our young volunteers, which was a big hit. We were very privileged to have John as our main speaker on the day. John's message was very clear that day – "Volunteering is not just about giving but is a win-win situation for young people," he said. "It can help them to develop very important skills such as increasing self-confidence and developing integrity. This can be really beneficial when it comes to going to university and starting a new job as they will find it is much easier to meet people and are more likely to thrive in new situations. It is also very rewarding – you will never experience the same sense of joy and fulfilment as you do by reaching out and feeling that you are really helping people."



So, the Michaela Foundation is running their Summer Camps in various locations across Ireland again this year and details can be found on their website: <http://michaelafoundation.com/summer-camps/>

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to John and Úna for supporting SVP's Youth Programme over the last year and good luck with all future projects, as it has been a privilege to work with such an amazing organisation!





*By Áine Doran*

*St. Anthony's Conference President*

Taking on the role of President of Queen's SVP was a last minute decision, made just before the start of term. Our conference was going through a phase of restructuring and the task ahead looked daunting, but I don't regret taking on the role. This year, our group of 20 members have been some of the most fantastic and enthusiastic people I have ever met who have thrown themselves into every project we have run.

As a conference, our 2 main projects for the past few years have been weekly visits to both a nursing home and homeless day centre. The nursing home visits provide company to residents who otherwise would not have weekly visits. At Christmas we also visit the home to sing carols for the residents, which the staff say is one of the highlights of the season for them. At the homeless drop in centre we help the staff in a number of ways. We help sort through donated food and clothes, help with the cleaning of the kitchen and communal areas as well as again providing company for the service users, with a big aim of ours being to treat them with the dignity they deserve.

Christmas is for, like most conferences, an especially busy time. This year our main focus was on the hamper appeal. Over the last few years we have found that it has mainly been just our members who have contributed to the appeal so this year we tried to branch out into the wider Queen's community. We held collections in the Student's Union and outside a local Centra. Our drop off point for donations was in the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's where we also had our pink 'Giving Tree'. The tree was covered with gift tags that had different items of food written on, with the idea being that people would take a tag and bring back relevant food. We did this for two main reasons; to try and ensure people would remember to donate and to make sure we had a variety of items for our hampers. The appeal was a great success and we were able to pass several hampers onto St Brigid's Parish conference to distribute to the families they work with.



February was another busy month for us, with two big events. The first was the SVP NI Youth Day in Ballymena. Six of us went to the day and it was a great experience. It was great to see the wonderful work being done in schools as well as a chance for us to show that SVP doesn't stop after school, that it keeps going at university. The second event was the annual intervarsity's weekend for college conferences. In total there were 12 conferences in attendance, including a group from Scotland. It was a great weekend with some really useful workshops and presentations from different conferences that gave us all great ideas to bring back with us. Next year will be the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we are already looking forward to it!



Despite Queen's SVP conference being one of the first societies to form at the University, we are not one of the biggest. However we don't see that as an issue. As one of our members said to me a few weeks ago, we are more like a family than a society. The passion of our members in what they do is truly amazing and it has been a privilege to be their president. I look forward to remaining involved for however long I am at Queen's as I know this group of people have wonderful things ahead of them.

St. Anthony's Conference at QUB

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# ST LOUISE'S COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGE GIRLS GOING THE EXTRA MILE!

BY KAITLYN QUINN & CIARA MCILLWEE

*BOTH GIRLS ARE UPPER 6TH FORM PUPILS IN ST. LOUISE'S BELFAST*

Kaitlyn and I are A-Level students studying at St Louise's Comprehensive College, Falls Road, Belfast which is a Vincentian school. We are both studying three A-Levels while also volunteering in our local community. In November 2013 we got the opportunity to volunteer in St Vincent De Paul homework club at the Mountain View centre in Turf Lodge, West Belfast. On a weekly basis we worked alongside the staff, helping children complete homework, getting involved in free play such as arts and crafts and, we prepared healthy snacks for the children once their homework was complete. We really enjoyed working with children at the ages of 4-11 as this was a new experience for us and we learnt a lot, e.g. how to keep young children focused and engaged. Working in an informal environment was very relaxing and not like the typical school setting.



We felt a sense of achievement when the children left as they were happy and it was obvious that they enjoyed our company. This developed our confidence with working with young children and also adults. This was beneficial to us as we both want to pursue a career in teaching and recently had an interview for St.Mary's Teacher Training College in Belfast. To support our University application we were able to say that we achieved a John Paul II Award gold medal on the basis of the work in the Mountain View Centre.

Throughout our experience we both enjoyed different aspects of the home work club. While Ciara enjoyed meeting new children and participating in the artistic aspect of the work, I enjoyed helping the children complete their home- work and getting to know them individually.

We were invited to participate in the SVP summer scheme 2014. We attended for 5 weeks and went on 10 trips in total with the children. We went to the beach, Newcastle, W5, cinema, park crawl etc. Engaging with the children and looking after their safety which is extremely important, was what we focused on most. We have loved the experience we have gained with the SVP after schools and we hope to continue volunteering with the society in the future. .



## A Busy Year so Far...

**Living Youth** - the Down and Connor Youth Commission has now been working in youth ministry across the Diocese of Down and Connor for the past 2 years. Our aim is to provide opportunities for young people and young adults to experience, enjoy, share and celebrate their Catholic faith.

### **PARISH GIFT 1 & 2**

Last year we launched the Parish GIFT 1 (Growing in Faith Together) programme, a new resource for year 8 children, which is a follow on from the sacrament of confirmation. During the programme the children meet their priest, learn more about their parish, they pray together, sing together, take part in an a craft session, play games and bake. The programme finishes with a Mass of thanksgiving during where they are introduced to their parish community. More than 200 children and volunteers took part in the Parish GIFT 1 fun day, in June, in Newcastle which finished with the painting of a diocesan banner and Mass celebrated by Bishop Noel. In September this group of children will progress to Parish GIFT 2 and we will welcome our new year 8s to the first year of the programme.



### **POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARD**

We currently have almost 1,000 young people on the Pope John Paul II Award across first and second year. As part of this Award young people volunteer in their parish, their school and their community over a period of 16 months. To complete their Award our young volunteers then take part in a workshop day to write up their final presentation which challenges them to demonstrate how their volunteering has impacted on their lives and the lives of others as they live out their Catholic faith more fully.

### **PILGRIMAGE**

Last summer we went on a pilgrimage to Rome, where a group of 44 young people and leaders enjoyed the many sites and sacred places of the Eternal City. We also enjoyed morning prayer, Mass, night prayer and a visit to the swimming pool every day. Our young people and young adults leaders were a joy to be with and participated in every part of our very full itinerary.



### **DIOCESAN CONVENTION**

100 young people and young adults attended the Diocesan Convention in September 2014 where they took part in a workshop which saw the launch of 'Youth Alpha' in the Diocese. The programme will be piloted in 6 parishes and will culminate in a joint residential to complete the final 4 modules and to plan youth ministry formation for terms 2 and 3.

To find out more about the projects above and about our work and to follow our daily diary visit our website [www.livingyouthni.org](http://www.livingyouthni.org) and like our facebook page [livingyouthni](https://www.facebook.com/livingyouthni)



# MV Programme Volunteering through SVP Youth!

By Aidan McCabe



The Millennium Volunteer (MV) Programme celebrated its 15th anniversary this year in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. It was our largest ever ceremony with 1,749 young people eligible for the 200 hour Award of Excellence, that represents a staggering 349,000 volunteering hours that we have recognised this year from young people across the country. The programme has grown in popularity year on year and we are already receiving nominations for next year's Award.

Millennium Volunteers is a programme funded by the Youth Council for NI and supported by the Department of Education for NI which provides young people between the ages of 14 and 25 years with recognition for their sustained commitment to volunteering. Young people receive certificates for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering and this can occur within school or within a community/voluntary setting. The programme is great for providing young people with experience for CVs, UCAS personal statements and interviews. They also develop their 'soft' skills, give something back to their school or community or voluntary organisations and it's great fun.

Volunteer Now provides all the resources free of charge to the organisation. All the young people receive a record book so that they can record their volunteering and have it verified by their co-ordinator. Volunteer Now do not monitor or assess these books – they belong to the young person for their own volunteering record. We prepare the certificates and send them to the organisation when requested. The 50 Hour Award is signed by a relevant representative within the organisation, the 100 Hour certificate is signed by the Chief Executive of Volunteer Now and the 200 Hour Award by the Minister of Education for NI.



If you are interested in participating in the MV programme through SVP contact Volunteer Co-ordinator Claire Morgan at ([claire.morgan@svpni.co.uk](mailto:claire.morgan@svpni.co.uk) or 028 90 351 561)

You can also learn more about MV by visiting the MV section on Volunteer Now's Youth Team website at <http://bit.ly/1adRErI> or you can contact the Youth Team in Volunteer Now at [youth@volunteernow.co.uk](mailto:youth@volunteernow.co.uk) or 028 90 232020

# CONFERENCE CORNER

## PROFILE ON A YOUTH CONFERENCE...

### ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE, MAGHERA



On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February, roughly 350 pupils set off to Tullyglass in Ballymena, excited for a day full of fun and entertainment and that's exactly what we received! This year our school, (St Patricks College Maghera) set out with 30 pupils, there we met with schools from all over the country, Antrim, Derry, Dundonald and even Portrush. The day was set up in such a way that we got the chance to talk and socialise with different groups from other schools, it was a great way to make new friends and learn the importance of charity work to help the world around us.

When we arrived at the Tullyglass we received a friendly welcome from the Youth Development Officer Claire Morgan and from that very moment we stepped into an inspiring and very memorable experience. Each school began by setting up a presentation to showcase the wonderful work each of us had completed in 2014, each school got the chance to walk round and have a look at projects other schools accomplished. It was very interesting to see the contribution other people were making to this magnificent charity.

There to help make the day extra special was, Fr. Raymond McCullagh and John McAreavey each providing us with an inspirational story of their experience volunteering. Fr McCullagh quickly got everyone on their feet to perform 'Rise and Shine' this was a great ice breaker and got everyone feeling excited, welcome and most definitely warmed up with the dance routine to go along. This special day captured the essence of being involved in the Young SVP Programme and illustrated how volunteering and charity work could be really enjoyable and most of all rewarding.

John McAreavey told us about his experience in forming the Michaela foundation, he said that it had transformed his life and explained that there is a warm, positive feeling associated with charity work and emphasised that we should all take every opportunity possibly to help those in the communities around us.



Once we had listened to the amazing stories of John McAreavey and Fr McCullagh we all received letters. On these letters we had a series of questions we had to find out, by attending the stands set up or by asking students from other schools. Each booth we attended we received a sticker on our form which we then had to hand up in order to enter the competition to win SVP goodies. A booth that stood out to me was the dome that we went into and were videoed telling what projects we worked on in 2014, and what we were planning to do now in 2015.

Overall, it was a great day from the ice breaker, to the yummy meal. A day that emphasised that your good work will always be rewarded and to show that people in our community appreciate the work we do to support them. A day that broadcasting the change we can make in our world and encouraging each of us to take the small steps to chance it.



**We need to be the change we want to see in the world!**

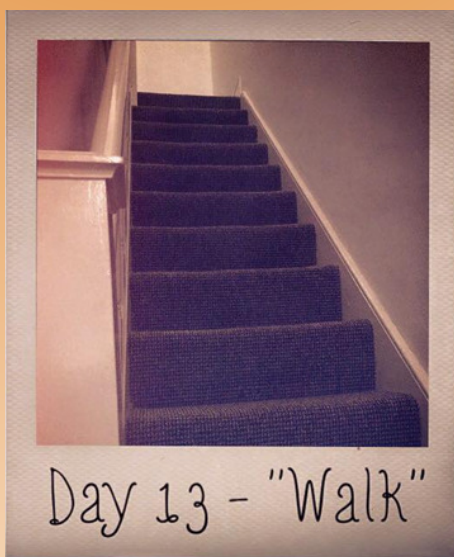
# Lenten Photo Challenge

By Sarah McCaughan



Sarah McCaughan is an English teacher at St. Louise's Comprehensive College, Belfast. She is married to Francis McCaughan with a beautiful little boy. Both Francis and Sarah are lay members of the Dominican Order. Sarah has a blog and has participated in beautiful Lenten reflections through photos. Here are some of her favourites...

## Lenten Photo Challenge - Day 13 - "Walk"



These are our stairs. They need hoovered. When I was pregnant I waddled up and down them. When Vincent was born he was so tiny and I was afraid of dropping him & causing him lifelong problems. A legitimate fear people! You've heard the joke : "Were you dropped on your head as a youngster?" And everyone laughs while the mother is quietly considered and judged.

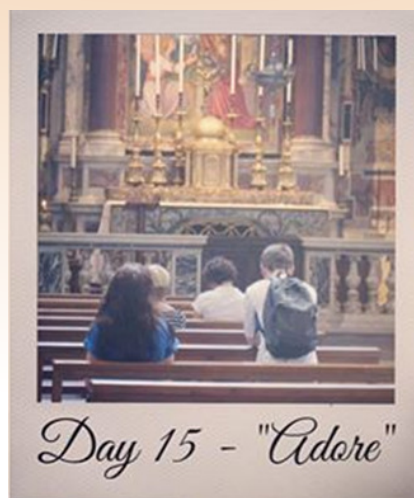
I teetered up the stairs with Vincent, his wee warm head pressed to my shoulder.

I remember praying "Jesus, I trust in you", just repeating that phrase over and over when I was pregnant. When Vincent was born it soon became "Jesus, we trust in you." I always met the end of the stairs safely.

The Divine Mercy chant helped me through what would appear to be such a silly everyday task. I now carry Vincent up and downstairs like a rugby ball and go in by the weight of him, this is a more likely dropping phase!

Try using the chant during life's little challenges - you are immediately comforted! Thank you Jesus, for being our companion.

## Lenten Photo Challenge - Day 15 "Adore"



I was once asked by a friend to think of a single sentence advertising the Catholic faith. He said "Imagine you're on the street outside a church and you have one sentence to say to passers-by to invite them in. How would you present the Church?" I really like this question. As a member of the Order of Preachers, I try to follow St Peter's instruction to be 'ready to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you' (1. Pet. 3:15).

Still.... This was tricky. My mind began to race. 'Ummm... OK... Let's see.... Ummm.... Salvation, Redemption, Freedom, Happiness, Community, Friendship, Love, Grace, Vocation, Authority, Truth...'

These words tumbled through my head as I tried to construct a single sentence encapsulating how much my faith means to me and how important it is to share it with others. How on earth could I do justice to all these concepts with only a couple of words? Then I remembered, I have superpowers.

Dominicans receive a special grace for preaching, and by repeating the magic words: "Shut up, Francis", my mind quieted and the answer simply appeared. I turned to my friend and said "My sentence would be: 'Come and adore the Living God'".

The origin of the word 'adore' comes from the Latin 'adorare' - 'to worship'. For many, worship means singing loudly, waving arms, getting really into it. There's joy and there's fanfare and emotions bursting all over the place. People head to God's house every Sunday, throw Him a party and everyone heads home, a good time had by all.

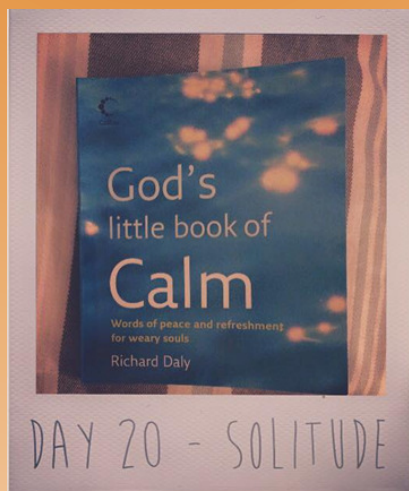
But there's a bigger mystery that can't fully be expressed. Human experience isn't solely comprised of celebration. There are times of sadness, despair, doubt and fear. Sometimes when we do all the talking, we forget to give God room to speak to us. There's a deeper reality to our relationship with God.

As Catholics, we believe that Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist. He told us so. We see it throughout scripture. When we sit in His presence, it is really Him there in front of us. Body, blood, soul and divinity. The tabernacle in every Church is the sanctuary of God, who dwells amongst us always. 'Immanuel' - 'God with us'. That's who Jesus is.

Adoration, for me, is the simple response to realising how much we are loved by God. It's accepting that whatever is happening in life, I can come to God and just lay everything at His feet. It's not having to say anything because He knows. It's the soul resting in the presence of its maker. I don't need to understand it fully, I doubt I could, but that's fine. To sit in God's presence and just listen to Him is the best thing in the world.

This Lent, spend some time with Jesus and listen.

## Lenten Photo Challenge - Day 20 - "Solitude"



Today has been extremely busy. A demanding work day + a sick baby can get on top of you. (Vince is ok- seeing Doc in the morning and he's full of Calpol, covered in Vicks and out for the count!) Once he was asleep I took a moment before starting into marking to pray. I used to always wait until I went to bed to pray, right before I slept. Nowadays I just collapse so I am working on fitting prayer into different areas of life.

A prayer before class, Grace before meals and prayers at Mass are all great but I really get a lot from just stopping and resting in my maker. Tonight's challenge encouraged me to do just that. God's Little Book of Calm helped me pray and reflect. One page said:

### MEDITATE

Most of the time our minds are like water whipped into waves by the distraction and pressures of life. We spend much of our lives in touch only with the choppy surface. Meditation enables us to calm down, so the water becomes clear and still.

"May my meditation be pleasing to Him as I rejoice in the Lord." Psalm 104:34

The author says: "It is God's will that none of his children become perplexed with the cares and toils of life, for he is more than willing to cover you with his calming presence." Richard Daly

I am now ready to return to marking and get ready for a new day. Solitude with God has revived and refreshed me. I feel supported and calm. God, like Frasier Crane, wishes you good mental health, and like a parent he wishes to check in with you during the day. I like "God's Little Book of Calm" because it's the bits of the Bible my brain can handle after a long day and it is composed with refreshment and invigoration in mind. (Got it in a second hand shop for £1 - pure steal!) When you are insanely busy you need a little "me time" if you are to be of any use to anyone. Today has shown me that God will give you peace and tranquility, a pep talk and also the strength to go on after your moment alone.

Take some time alone today. God's waiting to help you.

Some more of Sarah's Lenten Reflections....





# CAMP VINCENT IS BACK FOR 2015!

## 01 WHERE & WHEN?

We have decided to go back to Todd's Leap Adventure Centre in Ballygawley, Co. Tyrone! This year we will be going on:

**Friday 26th to Sunday 28th June 2015**



## 02 WHO CAN GO?

There are only **50 places** this year, so anyone between the ages of **13 and 18 years old**, whose school also participates in SVP's Youth Programme. But remember, places will be given on a first come first serve basis. **So ask your Teacher for details!**

## 03 WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

This year, again, the camp will be free including transport. There will be some outdoor pursuit activities such as paint balling, climbing wall and off-road rallying. However, we will also be focusing on SVP workshops examining the work we do in school and parish.

All in all, fun will be had by all - hope to see you all in June!



Details of Camp Vincent will be sent out to schools before the Easter holidays and further contact will be made with each participant's parent/guardian at a later date. Any further queries, please contact Claire Morgan, Youth Development Officer at SVP Northern Regional Office: Email: [claire.morgan@svpni.co.uk](mailto:claire.morgan@svpni.co.uk) or 028 90 351 561