

New Year New Challenges from the President's Desk

I was recently lucky enough to hear the Archbishop of Liverpool speaking at Mass in Ushaw College. He spoke, amongst other things, about the changing economic climate and the predicted forthcoming rise in unemployment.

Whether we are Impact members or YCW members we will be affected by the times ahead. We may face situations of insecurity in our own study, working lives or family situations. Our own personal finances may be affected, but if not us, it will certainly affect those around us.

The Archbishop appealed to the congregation: "with a new urgency this year, have compassion for those that will come to [the New Year] unemployed and in debt". He asked people to become "servants of hope, a hope that will not disappoint".

This is our task as YCWs and Impact members - to be servants of hope -or, as Cardijn put it, to be "Rays of Sunshine"

in our local communities, families and places of work or study.

Impact members, you have so much you can show to others through your action. Most importantly, your group can choose to get involved in the **Get Fair** Campaign - reaching out to young people living in hard times. You can be a real sign of hope to them. Speak to your adult companions or email getfair@ycwimpact.com to find out how to get involved in the campaign.

YCW members, we are called to be a compassionate presence to others in times of hardship and difficulty. Whether working, unemployed or studying towards work, you can be a great sign of hope to others. In the smallest of actions - a smile or a word of reassurance- you can show that there are alternative ways to view the world.

Each one of us can show a perspective on life which is not driven by money and success, but is driven out of concern for those around us and for a real desire

to live life fully. These are not simply nice words written on a page, but words which express a real opportunity to be YCW leaders in our time; leaders in our own lives, especially in our work.

Archbishop Patrick said that this is no time for hiding talents in the ground, but rather, it is time for leaving safe harbours. That is to say that now is the time to put out into the deep and to become the people God is calling us to be (Luke 5:4). In practical terms that means we must be prepared to take the risk to reach out in friendship to others, to offer the support to those in our work places, or our lecture rooms, or on our daily commute, who need someone to show genuine solidarity through action.

This is the task of YCW today - to transform our local places of work, study and leisure, and through this we will transform the world.

Danny

National Council - *inspires Impact and YCW into Action* *by Rebecca Watson*



Attending national council for the weekend was a fantastic experience. I went to the weekend feeling that our group had taken no action and that we were never going to be organised enough to plan and carry out an action. By the end of the

time together I was fired up and ready to return to Cardiff to encourage our group to get going!

When we arrived at Wistaston Hall we had time to chill and unpack after our journeys before we had supper. After supper we gathered together for our first session. We took time to get to know each other as well as to find out how far we are with our YCW groups.

It was great to hear other people describing the same journey we are on with our own group and it is especially encouraging to hear from the more advanced groups, who could give us some useful tips. We were able to offer each other advice as well as to explain the different action campaigns we have taken, from the small to the much larger. We discussed our

hopes for the weekend and the year. We finished off by coming together for Evening Prayer.

The following morning we had the option of starting our day with Mass before breakfast. We said Morning Prayer together before heading to our sessions. During our first session we discussed the YCW vision, thinking about what we know already, what do we find good and what we find challenging. By the end of the day we had developed a future plan to develop this vision, as well as taking time to think about our part over the next year.

Lunch gave us an ideal opportunity to talk to people from other regions to discuss actions that they have taken, talking about why they went well or not.

We talked about what a YCW leader is and what we view as a perfect world. We talked about national campaigns to bring us together for an action campaign, but also had time to get together with those in our region to think about what we as a region can do. We finished our day with evening prayers before having supper together.

On the Sunday we looked at some of the resources available for both YCW and Impact! We discussed the president and chaplaincy report as well as approving the five year strategic plan for 2008-2013. Before leaving we had Mass in the chapel then lunch together. Then sadly we had to say goodbye.

As well as the invaluable things I learnt about YCW, it was great to spend a weekend away with like-minded people. As well as all the hard work there was time to get to know each other and socialise, although some people really need to work on their acting skills for charades!! It was an amazing weekend and has given me more hope that our group will take the action we have been planning.

Since receiving this report, we have also received news of Rebecca's group's action. In 'Hands up against bullying!' (see back page) you can read about how Rebecca's hopes were turned into reality.

Challenge to Lead

In November, after a long wait, the new YCW material, *Challenge to Lead*, was launched.

Created by young adults from Ireland, England and Malta the pack creatively presents the reality of life for 16-25 year olds. It helps to inspire groups to get to grips with what is really going on in their daily lives, encourages them to grow in responsibility towards others, and gives them the confidence to take action.

The pack contains a guide for the young people and the adult or chaplain who will accompany the group. It also includes the ***Challenge to Lead*** DVD, with 29 video clips presenting discussion starters and scripture reflections. The book includes twelve themed enquiries which guide the group through the DVD using the YCW method of See-Judge-Act:

Community, Work, Equality and Relationships, Interracial Issues, Religious Diversity, Church, Money, Education, Leisure, Drugs alcohol & tobacco, Environment, Taking a Lead.

The writing, filming and producing was completed by young people. It is a resource true to the reality of young people's lives and is a must have for everyone concerned with reaching out and making a difference for 16-25 year olds.

International Launch



The *Challenge to Lead* pack's European launch took place in unique Maltese style on 21st December. The YCW group '3D', who had taken part in the filming project for Malta, organised a gala evening to officially announce the new resource.

The evening was a huge success, with music by YCW groups 'Symphonik' and 'Switch', speeches from those who had taken part in the filming project and premiers of DVD clips from the new resource. Almost every member of the Maltese YCW was present, as well as visitors Danny Curtin, from England and Wales, and Bob Walters from Media Ink.



Three members of Symphonik

Bob, accredited BBC trainer, who worked with the YCW members to produce the DVD, offered his thanks to everyone who took part, saying the experience was 'one of the best of my life'.

Vanessa Caruana, YCW President in Malta, delivered an uplifting speech looking forward to the YCW activity for 2009. Everything she spoke about can also be said of our hope for the YCW in the UK. Here we offer just a few extracts from her words:



“I am happy tonight! I am happy to be here with you to celebrate the conclusion of another successful project and the beginning of a new chapter in the mission of YCW. Yet, what we are truly celebrating tonight are young people themselves ... young people who are not only growing in character and skills but are also changing the world around them. They are crying out that they want more than this

world has to offer; with all the injustices and pain the world carries. Because we are meant to live for so much more! Yes, young people can change the world around them with their own hands! Hands that maybe inexperienced but with good will and hard work can achieve anything!

... I am proud of the things YCW has achieved till now. Every time I go to YCW I see a new face that takes more and more responsibility and I see them grow into beautiful persons developing their potential. This is what makes my work as President worth it. And now, I just wonder how many more young people the movement can reach through the Challenge to Lead pack; how many more people can we make a difference to?

Indeed, tonight a new chapter begins for YCW. I'm looking forward for a new year that already promises well. As it is, it will be marked with hard work and greater commitment to be of service to other young people.”

Enlightened Vision

YCW member, Keith Attard (pictured below), read this poem, which he wrote himself, about his own journey in the YCW. It captures Keith's struggle to overcome his isolation and the welcoming and transforming role that Impact and YCW can play in people's lives.

I remember it well. It was dark and overcast. The stranger stepped inside. He didn't know anyone. It seemed as if he was lost in a faraway desert.

I remember it well. As he entered inside, looking around, he dreamt of the day he would find his way out of the wilderness.

He wasn't used to this situation. Everyone seemed comfortable sharing their thoughts, hopes and dreams. The stranger however remained lost, silent and observant.

This happened week after week. The situation was still unclear and he was still longing for food and drink. Sand obscured his vision. The horizon appeared blurred. He had taken the wrong road, and had never arrived anywhere.

The water was stagnant, the food stale. However, he waited for the day when he would find fresh food and drink.

This didn't take long. Finally, he started to laugh, he started to contribute and didn't just observe wordlessly. In this faraway desert he found family companionship. The safety and compassion of this family changed his life. That is what he needed.



As he shared his thoughts, hopes and dreams, the direction he was travelling in appeared clearer. His vision now wasn't obscured but enlightened.

This family continued to love and respect him. They found a place for him to stay, fresh food and drink, and helped him plan his way out of the lonely desert. He spent the greatest moments with them, the good and bad.

It was a family to be envied. They did everything with attention and dedication. A family, which, due to the love found within it, is flourishing throughout the world.

It has passed through many a rough time, but has realized its potential so they remain strong, and rise to any occasion.

This is comparable to when the stranger was hungry and thirsty and all he found was stale food and sour drink.

The stranger now perceives life from a different perspective. Before he acts, he now judges and thinks. He doesn't hurry through life but now reflects with an open mind.

He dreams often, and discusses what he dreams, so together with his family he develops these thoughts.

His talents are now exposed and he is now conscious of his abilities. He looks at life optimistically to continue to work within his new-found family.

Today, he isn't found in any faraway desert, but in a desert close to home filled with precious love. He is no longer a lost stranger but a reformed person. The dark veil clouding his eyes is melting. The horizon is clear. While his path of travel inscribed on golden tablets.

Today, this stranger is present amongst you. He thanks you for all you have done to help him because in the desert he was lost, and is now found, he was dead, and now alive!!

Hands up against bullying!

Cardiff impact have taken action! Using the 'See, Judge, Act method' we realised that bullying is a huge problem everywhere. We could all think of someone we know who has been bullied within the last year, and most of us could think of a time when we ourselves were bullied.

Being bullied should not have a place in society and we wanted to do something about it. Looking at people who were being bullied we saw that the majority of people were being bullied as they made the transition between primary and high school. As if this time isn't difficult enough, being bullied on top must be unbearable.

We decided that our action would be for those children who will be making this transition either in this academic year or the next. We approached the feeder schools to our Catholic high school, offering them the chance to have us come in during anti-bullying week to talk to the children.

We had an enthusiastic response from St Bernadette's primary school, so we set to work preparing everything for our talk. We prepared a brief presentation on what bullying is, how it makes you feel, and the fact that nobody should be bullied. We gave the children some ideas of what to do if they see someone on their own and how to be friendly to everyone so that nobody is left out. We made an activity pack for the children to take home, which included colourings, word searches and stickers.

We were really nervous going to do the presentation, as it was our first public action, luckily everything went well. As well as the presentation we did games, group discussions and at the end two of the children treated us to a dance that they had danced that week in a British championship competition. This was great to watch and showed the children that we are all unique and special in our own way, and that's why nobody should be bullied.

It was such an achievement to have finally done our first public action, the school thanked us, and even asked if we could do that sort of thing on any other topics as the children seemed to have learnt so much and enjoyed themselves!

Getting Fair in Rochdale: Reaching out to the margins



The young people of St Patrick's Impact group Rochdale have been looking at ways they can make things fairer for other young people in the parish. They had been looking at the issue of poverty in their area and decided they needed to help those who didn't have the opportunities they had, especially at Christmas time.

They decided to create present hampers for young people in four families that they had identified with the parish priest Fr Joe. So that they could buy the presents they held a bacon butty fundraiser (with vegetarian option) which raised them £80. The money was divided between the families and the presents bought. This wasn't all they did, they applied to the parish poor fund and received cash which they then gave to the families as they delivered the hampers.

Ciara, one of the group, said "It was amazing to see the smiles on the young people's faces as we delivered the hampers. They were just so grateful we'd bothered to think of them." St Patrick's Impact certainly helped those four families to have a happier Christmas this year.

Preston Impact at Castlerigg Manor

by Shaun Morgan

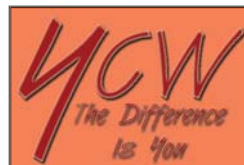


On the 3rd-5th October, the Impact Youth Group had their annual residential at Castlerigg Manor. This year's theme was 'Being Young', this was shown in the workshops which were created by the young people.

Friday evening started with a workshop on dreams; this included activities on people we are inspired by, films/music related to dreams, and teamwork guiding people around a course blindfolded. The next workshop was on how the media influences young people, this included topics on teenage pregnancy and knife crime. The workshop represented how young people can be stereotyped. The members of the group who went on the diocesan trip to Lourdes gave a talk on their experience of Lourdes, which concluded with a question and answer time. The Saturday afternoon consisted of a damp walk into Keswick, where the group had the afternoon as free time. During the evening, we celebrated Mass with Fr Bernard Woods, the Impact group's chaplain. In the evening, the group had the opportunity to get to know more about each other, and represent people's interest with art, when we made a banner about the weekend. Sunday morning's workshop was about stereotyping, and how young people don't specifically fall into a certain stereotype. The weekend concluded with a discussion about the future of the group.

We would like to thank the Castlerigg staff, Terry Mattinson, Fr Bernard and all the young people who made the weekend possible.

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