

Festival of Catholic Education at St David's Hall Cardiff

On Thursday November 3rd 2011, the Archdiocese of Cardiff brought 'The Year of Catholic Education' to a close with a Festival of Catholic Education Service at St David's Hall Cardiff. Over 600 children and young people from across the Archdiocese, along with Archbishop George Stack and a packed hall of clergy, parents, staff and governors, took part in a service of hymns, prayers and readings to mark the contribution Catholic schools make to the formation of young people and to welcome the Archbishop to the Archdiocese.

In preparation for the Festival, young people in all the schools of the Archdiocese spent considerable time reflecting upon what it means to build a civilisation of love, which has been a key theme of the Archbishop since his inauguration. Examples of the art work and poetry produced by the young people were shown in the service booklet and on the St David's Hall screens before the service and will soon be available for viewing on the Archdiocesan website, thanks to Mr Gareth Rein of St Joseph's Primary School, Penarth. In addition, every school took part in the October 2011 CAFOD campaign, raising over £18,000 and purchasing a vast array of CAFOD World Gifts, which were presented to the Archbishop as a 'Welcome to the Archdiocese' gift from the schools of the Archdiocese. Following the presentation, Mr Richard Laydon, Head of CAFOD Wales, spoke about the benefit these gifts would bring to many people throughout the world.

Before and after the Service, entertainment was provided on Level 3 of St David's Hall by students of Bishop Hedley High School, Merthyr Tydfil, St Illtyd's High School, Cardiff, Cardinal Newman Comprehensive School, Pontypridd and St David's College, Cardiff and on the outside steps of St David's Hall by students of St Mary's High School, Lugwardine.

During the service, readings and prayers were read on the theme of the 'trinity' of the home, school and parish by Mrs Anne Ballard (Chair of the Family Life Commission), Mrs Joanne White (Parenting Support Worker), Canon Peter Collins (Chair of the Schools' Commission), Mrs Anne Robertson (Director of Schools), Mgr Robert Reardon (Vicar General) and seminarian, Mr Daniel Stanton.

The evening, though, belonged to the young people, who shared a wealth of talent and prayer throughout the evening. Poems, written and read by children from our primary schools (Joseph Williams, Ellie Jackson, Will Rayer, Tom Powell, Holly Ahmed on 'My Family'; Natasha Mwansa, Alexander Wang, Sian Taylor, Jessica King and Ellis Winstone on 'My School' and Toby Kearns, Lily Wooding and Molly Johns on 'My Parish'), an orchestra of 75 musicians and Junior and Senior Choirs of over 400 children and young people, raised hearts and minds to God.

Festival organiser, Director of Religious Education, Mrs Anne Manghan, was delighted with the celebration, 'This evening has been an opportunity to recognise the importance of the relationship between the home, school and parish in the religious formation of our young people. I am very grateful to the staff and pupils of our schools and colleges for the part they played in the festival and in the preparation for it. I am particularly grateful to Frances Bibey for her organisational and administrative help; to the staff, musicians and choristers of St John's College, Cardiff, especially Mr Dominic Neville and Mrs Diana Neville, students Joseph Evans and Jerry Zhou for arranging some of the musical items for the orchestra, harpist Noa Gabay, organist Mr James Wall and pianist Alex Knight. Also to soprano soloist, Lucie Jones, Mrs Gillian Weale of St Mary's Primary School, Bridgend, who conducted the Junior Choir; to Mr Tim Crosse and Mrs Jane Mcfarlane of St Helen's Primary School, Caerphilly, the students of St David's College, Cardiff, Paddy Landers and Anne Bibey for all their hard work front of house, and finally to all the staff of our schools who provide such support and encouragement to our children and young people. It was a wonderful way to welcome our Archbishop to the Archdiocese and to bring 'The Year of Catholic Education' to a fitting conclusion.'