

## World Youth Day Speech

- Days in the Diocese

Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August Dave, Jamie and myself were given the generous opportunity by Father Connolly to represent St Kentigern's during 'Days in the Diocese' and World Youth Day. 'Days in the Diocese' took place in the first week whilst we stayed in the immensely historic city of Avilla. Avilla is surrounded by very picturesque Moorish walls; though only small it held out against Muslim forces until 1492 and most importantly it has had a huge impact on Catholic theology. Even to this day Avila is still a rock for Spain's church due to the presence of the Carmelite order.

While in Avilla we learned about the efforts of its patron St Teresa who along with St John of the Cross helped reform their own order and ultimately the direction of the church which led to the counter-reformation. Teresa and John tried to live by example as they adhered to a life of minimalism and sometimes complete isolation in order to strive for a closer relationship and understanding with God. In an age when the Catholic Church had been too concerned with worldly matters Teresa's nuns brought God's church back to an essence of fundamentalism that can be traced back to the ancient prophets such as Elijah and of course Jesus Christ himself. As the young Carmelites aided the church through the turbulent times, may events like World Youth day and the spiritual education that goes along with it, allow the church to progress through present and future trials, for example secularism and liberal relativeness.

In addition during my time in Avilla and Segovia I witnessed the great works of religious architecture, there I realised that devotion towards God isn't just shown through prayer and the holy sacraments but also can be expressed through our words and actions in work and life itself. The masons that beautified these holy places worked tirelessly on projects that they would not see completed in their own lifetimes but still provided such service with great enthusiasm, imagination and creativity. In a slight manner the masons were similar to how Teresa and John were inspired to write down their visions during times of silent meditation.

May we too find resolution and purpose in our own times of silence?  
Furthermore our own economies could take inspiration from the long-sightedness of these craftsmen.

- Madrid

Into the second week we then journeyed to Madrid to complete the final course of the trip, before attending World Youth day itself we involved ourselves catechise every day in a Jesuit College. Where members of the higher clergy such as the UK's own Cardinal O'Brien, listened and aimed to resolve general questions concerning faith and moral issues affecting the western world. In that hall there was an infectious aura of joy and good will towards everyone present but also a shared intimate excitement about God that I have personally never experienced before. Another notable aspect was that the far eastern nations where Catholicism is aggressively oppressed set the best example. May we be grateful that despite legal and political confrontation we can attend church unhindered and have the ability to still influence our ailing society?

Finally we come to the finale of World Youth itself which encompassed many qualities that have mentioned previously but on a much grander scale. The thing that was most poignant to me was been accompanied by up to 2 million Catholics which made me realise that Catholicism isn't a dying faith and that these young people will express their experience of the holy father just like me, far and wide. All the people walking in the same direction to the air field or kneeling in front of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had something in common; they were all looking for contentment with God, the Church and ultimately humanity.