

# Catholic Leadership Meeting

Wednesday 29 October 2014.

*The following is a copy a talk given by Maria Ward of Fifth Year to the Catholic Leadership Group. Maria spoke of her faith; the support of her family in developing her faith and the opportunities for faith development offered by her school and parish.*



For me religion isn't simply a way of defining people, dividing them into categories. It's a way of living and being. It's what makes us who we are. It gives us our joy, hope, comfort and helps us to give these to others. My religion is what I am known as, I'm not ashamed to stand on the rooftops and proclaim my faith and why should I be, because in the beautiful words of Galatians Chapter 6 verse 14:

*"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*

I am Catholic and I am proud to be Catholic and proud that people can recognise these traits in me and me in them.

Parents are children's first teachers and the family is the basis all things. For me, my faith began at an early age, probably in my earliest days, I was baptised at two months old, on February 7<sup>th</sup> 1999 and I believe that my faith has prospered and developed ever since the day when my godparents and parents made the vows of baptism for me. I am very fortunate to be from such a strong Catholic family and I feel so blessed that my faith and relationship with the one who gives me strength has been allowed to blossom and is so encouraged by my parents.



After me, come four younger sibling and I am so lucky that Our Lord has given me such a loving and supportive family. I couldn't have really asked for much more. As a family we often pray together and attend Holy Mass whenever we can, no matter the language. In my family we were so privileged as to have a priest ordained in my great uncle, the late Canon James Morrow, who on February 7<sup>th</sup> 1999 helped me make my first baby steps into Catholicism and from whence I have been leaping and bounding ever since.



In school, we are given many opportunities to develop our faith and are encouraged to make our bond with the Almighty One ever stronger. In the words of my all-time favourite author, Enid Blyton: “you will get a tremendous lot of your time [with us], see that you give a lot back”, and I believe that throwing myself headfirst into the incredible faith life offered here, at St. Ninian's, is one of the best ways of giving back to a school which does so much for me. I know that it may be difficult for some of you to understand just how good the opportunities here are we are lucky to have such a fine Oratory and that it is used by pupils, staff and families throughout the School Year. We are very fortunate that the school is so encouraging of our faith with prayer groups, morning mass, religious organisations like Life Group, Helping Hands, Worship Group to name a few. There are so many different approaches taken to our faith and so many opportunities out there for us and we don't even know how lucky we are to have all these things at our fingertips.

I am a parishioner at St. Cadoc's Church and there I am also encouraged to develop my faith. I am a cantor at Saturday Night Vigil, a reader at Sunday 10.00am mass and I help out at Children's Liturgy. I feel that not only am I developing my own faith but I'm also sharing it with others. My parish is very close to my heart and I have made lots of friends there and have really enjoyed watching the young children from the liturgy grow and mature, taking their faith with them every step of the way.

Outside of these I am also associated a lot with the Opus Dei foundation set up by St. Jose-Maria Escriva. I am helped there to continue growing in faith through activities, talks and charity work. I have been on camps with them and have become good friends with girls from all over the world, from the USA to Hungary to Spain and so many others.



Another thing which really inspires me is NET. Last year and this year we have been blessed with such wonderful people preparing to give up their time for the benefit of us. I am sure that I speak for all who go to Youth Group on Sundays when I say that the NET teams are really enthusiastic, they always have time for you no matter how busy they are and really help us to mature with and in our



faith. I, myself, have been so amazed at the generosity and openness of the NET teams that I am strongly considering the option of doing NET myself so that I can give to others the motivation and love which the NET teams give so willingly to me.

Thanks for listening.