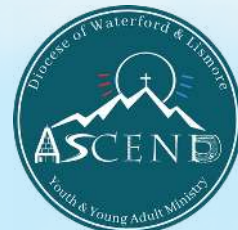


August 2025

Ascend Newsletter

YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF WATERFORD & LISMORE

www.waterfordlismore.ie/youth-ministry



The past year has been so busy with Youth & Young Adult Ministry that we wanted to take a pause before beginning this academic year to reflect and share some of the events and fruits with you. We are so grateful in particular for the men and women throughout the diocese who for the past three years have stepped forward in their parishes as Faith Reps. We are so encouraged by the wonderful young people and young adults who step up to engage with Pope John Paul II Awards, come on pilgrimages, volunteer as Faith Camp leaders or as helpers at Diocesan events. We feel so supported by all those who are praying for youth & young adult ministry in our diocese. We're aware too there is much more work to be done, but grateful to see the soil being prepared and some green shoots showing, through collaborative methods especially.



POPE JOHN PAUL II PILGRIMAGE TO MEDJUGORJE 2025



Photos: At the top of Apparition Hill in Medjugorje, one of the many places we prayed for the intentions of all our families, schools, parishes and benefactors.

SEEDS SOWN...

A number of our young pilgrims supported the Prayer in the Square 24 Hours for the Lord event for the Jubilee Year, when along with Holy Family Mission we ran a special "Youth Hour" of Adoration - it did everyone's heart good to see the marquee filled with young faces and hear young voices lifted in prayer and song!

We had a group reunion in June at Holy Family Mission - beginning with Mass followed by games, a testimony from Kathi at HFM, lunch, a hike in the forest and finally a beautiful half hour of adoration in the chapel; it was so encouraging to hear our youth speak about how they are encouraging each other to grow in faith!

Nine of the thirteen young people volunteered as leaders for the Good News Faith Camp in Tramore in July (the others would have liked to, but work commitments got in the way!) and their enthusiasm, love and joy were a great witness to the children participating.

Some of the young people participated in the Creation Surf Camp and the Youth 2000 Summer Festival, further deepening their faith! We've seen great fruit from the 2024 and 2025 pilgrimages and are discerning and planning how to build on this in a continual way for the year ahead.

FUN - FAITH - FRIENDSHIP!



Photos: Reunion at Holy Family Mission, Glencomeragh House in June and volunteering at the Good News Faith Camp in Tramore in July.

FAITH REP UPDATES

Our Faith Rep programme is in its third year, and we are approaching the final training day for this year's candidates before commissioning. The feedback from the Faith Reps themselves has been very positive and they have gained a lot personally as well as content-wise from the training sessions and ongoing support. We are currently taking feedback from the Year 1 group who are deciding whether to stay on for another year or two as they have almost completed their two-year commitment. We're learning a lot along the way, and seeing fruit in various parishes which is really encouraging for all of us! We have seen Faith Reps involved in the following (non-exhaustive list!):

- Running Youth Groups
- Creating Youth Noticeboards in Churches
- Extending Personal Invitations to young people to come to events
- Supporting the Pope John Paul II Award
- Running Adoration for Local Secondary Schools / Youth
- Assisting with Alpha Youth in schools
- Joining us as Pilgrimage leaders
- Facilitating Exam Liturgies in parishes
- Volunteering as Leaders at Summer Faith Camps
- Volunteering at Diocesan Youth Days
- Running Prayer Spaces in Parishes
- Helping to run Confirmation retreats
- And doing a lot of planning for future projects!



Recruitment for Faith Reps will begin again in January. More info on www.waterfordlismore.ie/parish-faith-reps



12 FAITH REPS COMMISSIONED IN SEPT 2024



Post-Commissioning we have encouraged our Faith Reps to arrange meetings with the Parish Priest and Strategic Task Force to look at practical but small steps to get started. We also offered training in person and on zoom on topics such as Nuts & Bolts: How to Run an U18 Event in Your Parish, Canva, Understanding your Temperaments, Lenten Ideas, Supporting Exam Students in Your Parish; as well as this we've offered an Advent Half-Day Retreat and a social gathering. Our Commissioning Ceremony will be on September 26th as our Year 3 Faith Reps set out on their journey! Onwards and upwards!



Gerard Hanley, Alpha Youth Ireland at our RENEWAL Conference last October.

Alpha Youth explores questions of life, faith, and meaning. In spring of 2025, there were more than 100 courses run in schools and churches across Ireland. More than 2000 students participated. This autumn, we have at least 3 Alpha Youth Series running in our diocese. Please pray for this endeavor and for meaningful encounters with Jesus! Sr. Kathryn Press, ASCJ coordinates Alpha in our diocese. Please reach out if you want to see Alpha in your school/ parish: skathryn@alphaireland.org

ALPHA YOUTH



SUPPORTING EXAM STUDENTS

Great to see some of our Faith Reps organising Masses and / or prayer resources for Exam Students coming up to the Junior Cycle & Leaving Cert exams this year! We have a full resource for schools / parishes crammed with ideas, as well as ideas for Graduations.

TRAINING YOUNG MISSIONARIES

A particular joy for members of the Task Force this year was being involved with training the young community members at Holy Family Mission in areas such as Alpha Youth, Prayer Spaces (Sr Kathryn) and Life after HFM: Knowing, Loving and Serving in my Parish (using their skills and experience to get involved in practical ways in their parishes facilitated by Nodlaig). One community member even messaged her parish priest straight after the workshop to offer her help in the parish over the summer, and arranged to meet and chat about possibilities. Every year these young adults are a joy to work with: their enthusiasm for mission and supporting the diocese is genuinely so uplifting! Let's keep these young faithful adults in our prayers as they continue to witness to their faith when they leave Holy Family Mission.



INTERDIOCESAN FRASSATI CAMINO FOR YOUNG ADULTS

In August we ran the Interdiocesan Jubilee Frassati Camino for Young Adults along St Declan's Way, and ten wonderful young adults joined the team for four days of hiking, prayer, reflection, laughter and tending to sore muscles! The weather was stunning and our accommodation at Holy Family Mission was a real blessing! It was a profound experience for the group, as the conversations, the prayer, the opportunities for silence as well as fellowship along the way opened their hearts to God and to new possibilities. Sincere thanks to our own Fr Shane O'Neill and Fr Vincent Stapleton (Cashel & Emly) who led the Camino so well, blending history and culture, prayer and meditation, fun, games and music! A highlight for many was our visit to St Declan's Well at Toor, a bit of a detour from our route: there we renewed our baptismal promises and had an opportunity for silent prayer and reconciliation. All the group said they would love to do this again next year, so we will see how the Lord leads us!



THE POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARDS

This Autumn over 60 students from 6 schools will be receiving Pope John Paul II Awards, as well as 5 Papal Cross recipients, which is very exciting! Although not a school award, our schools are very helpful in facilitating the award. Conscious we never want the award to be a "tick-the-box" exercise, we are continually looking for ways to engage our participants in faith-based formation activities, foster links in their parishes, and find new friends in faith. It's encouraging to see how the Faith Rep model is linking with the awards in many areas, offering opportunities for adoration in the parish or in school, considering Alpha Youth as an option to support our young people. As with everything, more can always be done, but we find from reading the reflections the young people submit, the more welcome they feel in their parishes, the more the award means to them and the more they get involved. Sincere thanks to all in parishes who facilitate the award! It was also great to have our Papal Cross participants help at Jubilee events like "Songs of Hope" in the Cathedral.

Papal Cross Participants volunteering at the Jubilee Songs of Hope Concert

CALLED TO GREATNESS!

As part of a Diocesan outreach to help young people gain hours, we ran our second annual "Called to Greatness" workshop on vocations in April in St John's Pastoral Centre. The young people who came were treated to wonderful testimonies from Sean and Ellen, a young married couple, from Sr Maureen Fitzgerald ASCJ and Fr John Harris ADM, as well as input from Holy Family Mission. With games and pizza thrown in the mix, it was a great two hours of fun and reflection on the unique call God has for all of us! This is something we hope to roll out for JP2 Award participants in other areas too.



MONTHLY ENCOUNTER FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Running since March 2022, Encounter is our Young Adult Outreach (18 - 35 year olds) in the Waterford City region. Once a month we invite young adults to join us in St John's Church for a talk or testimony followed by a time of adoration and music (usually the heavenly voices of the Sisters of Mary Morning Star), concluding with some pizza and chat afterwards. Confession is also available. This year we were blessed to have some excellent talks from Fr John Harris, Fr PJ Breen, Sr Maureen Fitzgerald, Pat Reynolds, Fr Kevin Deakin, as well as a special Stations of the Cross for Holy Week. Holy Family Mission provide great support each month too. We would love to see Encounter with its simple format spread to other areas, and are currently looking for ways to support our young adults outside of Encounter too.



DAY OF PRAYER AND REFLECTION FOR YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY IN MOUNT MELLERAY ABBEY



On Saturday 9th November we had a fantastic day with just under 50 in attendance: a mixture of young adults, priests, religious, prayer groups, people invested in youth ministry in various groups and movements, and Faith Reps. It was an uplifting day for all present, with lots of networking and a time of prayer for the intentions of all present and for our diocese.



The day was a local follow-on from "Into the Deep: Intentional Young Adult Ministry" Conference organised by the Bishop's Conference in June 2024. We had a very fruitful afternoon session using the Conversation in the Spirit model encouraged by the Synodal Process which led to some encouraging and hope-filled sharings on the questions: How can we walk intentionally with young people on their journey of faith and provide meaningful opportunities for them to encounter Jesus, and particularly, what is the Spirit prompting us to? It was especially encouraging to have so many young adults present, offering their experience and insights to those who are committed to youth & young adult ministry in different ways throughout the diocese. We look forward to running this event again!

This was the last Ascend event that we held at Mount Melleray Abbey before its closure in January, and we were grateful for the opportunity to be there and for all the support and prayer of the Cistercians there over the years.

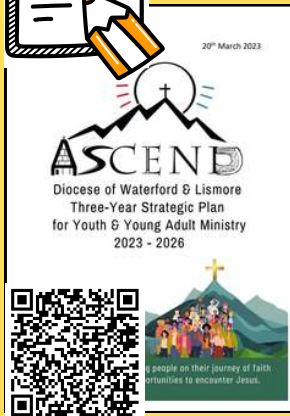
FAITH
CAMP
LEADERS



July saw three Campa Mhuire Mhathair camps for children in the diocese again: Dungarvan, Tramore and Ardmore. It's great to see so many Faith Reps, Young Adults and Teens from around the diocese who engage with Ascend Youth & Young Adult Ministry volunteering at these camps, sharing their joy, their enthusiasm and their faith with our youngest generations through catechesis, drama, art, music, sport, adoration and Mass and simple times of prayer too! Watching them blossom as leaders in faith is very special and gives great hope for the future!



THE THREE-YEAR PLAN...




Each summer the Strategic Task Force for Youth & Young Adult Ministry pauses to review and evaluate our progress through our three-year plan. It's hard to believe that we are already two thirds of the way through and thankfully are making great progress! This year we hope to place a greater emphasis on running regular events for U18s, to provide ongoing formation and fellowship for those participating in the Pope John Paul II Awards in particular. We also plan to roll out a Carlo Acutis "Pilgrim Statue" programme to schools and parishes where possible, and further consolidate events like the REvive Conference, Medjugorje Pilgrimage, Prayer Spaces and Encounter events: there are a lot of other plans which you'll be hearing about in time!



YOUTH ADORATION

As part of the Jubilee Year **PRAYER IN THE SQUARE**: 24 Hours for the Lord, Ascend Youth & Young Adult Ministry volunteered to run a youth hour, inviting both young people and those who wished to pray for young people, to gather from 6 - 7pm on Sunday 25th May led by youth from Holy Family Mission, our JP2 Pilgrimage to Medjugorje and youth leaders. It was a beautiful time of silent adoration mixed with music and prayer. We saw from our young people in Medjugorje that they loved Adoration, they loved the peace and the joy they experience through spending time with Jesus. Afterwards our teens and leaders gathered in McDonalds for some ice-cream treats - always welcome! Our Faith Reps in **TRAMORE** Parish have also successfully facilitated a beautiful **YOUTH ADORATION** initiative over the past number of months, with the young people always asking: "When is the next one?"




16 - 21 YEARS OLDS
YOUTH ADORATION

HOLY CROSS CHURCH
TRAMORE

THURSDAY 16TH JANUARY
7PM TO 8PM

"THE EUCHARIST IS MY
HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN."
(BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS)

Time spent with Jesus
CONFESSION AVAILABLE



REVIVE CONFERENCE

In 2024 we brought back the Diocesan Transition Year RE Day at Mount Melleray. Little did we realise as we planned our 2025 day that Mount Melleray would be closed in January, but we had already decided to move our event to the fantastic facility at the SETU Arena in Waterford. We had a very successful first REVIVE Conference with TYs and 5th years from post-primary schools around the diocese, and they greatly enjoyed the input from Elma Walsh, as well as the games, music and workshops. Bishop Phonsie also brought with him the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis on the day so it was lovely to have an opportunity to introduce them to the story of Carlo as well as the late Donal Walsh, in whose memory Elma founded the #LiveLife Foundation promoting a message of the preciousness of life.

Our next REVIVE Conference is planned for November 2025. It was great to have a number of our commissioned Faith Reps with us, as well as religious communities and Holy Family Mission to help run the conference and give great witness to faith at all stages of life and in all vocations - a fantastic example of the collaborative aspect of our strategic plan for youth and young adult ministry.



REVIVE HIKE & REFLECTION DAY

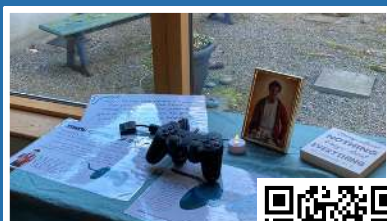
In April we ran, in collaboration with Holy Family Mission, a Reflection Day & Hike with over 60 Transition Year students from the Loreto Secondary School, Clonmel. The girls were great fun and participated well in the forest hike near Glencomeragh House, the reflection experience in the chapel, the craft activity, journalling time, games, hot chocolate and snacks. Katharina from HFM shared her impactful testimony of her struggle with self-esteem and fitting in until she realised her true worth as a daughter of God. The weather was amazing and it proved to be a great model for a Retreat Day for a post-primary school, one which we hope to build on.



EMMA THOMPSON LEADING THE TRAINING SESSION



Prayer Spaces in Schools



WATCH OUR HIGHLIGHTS VIDEO AND INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS!



PRAYER SPACES TRAINING

The Pastoral Centre was utterly transformed on the 12th March for a day-long Prayer Spaces Experience with a training session that night led by Emma Thompson of Prayer Spaces in School, Ireland. We welcomed adults, families and post-primary students throughout the day, and enthusiastic parishioners that evening who were all very inspired by the simplicity and the depth of experience a Prayer Space can evoke. Not to be confused with Sacred Spaces, Prayer Spaces are a particular interactive, individually directed type of prayer experience whose tangible nature, calming atmosphere, thought-provoking questions or simple activities can reach people of all ages at a level they don't expect, to help create a moment of encounter with God. We were very pleased with how our Prayer Spaces event ran, the only complaint was that it should have run for longer so more people could come. With that in mind we're planning to hold the Prayer Spaces over two days this Autumn. If you have 3 minutes to spare, it's well worth watching our highlights video on the Diocesan YouTube channel to see the set up and the responses from some of those who attended the training session.



Throughout the year we have been working closely with Stephen Plunkett, Diocesan Safeguarding Director, on producing a resource guide for those who want to run U18 events in their parishes, with relevant checklists, relevant forms, templates and Risk Assessment guides. Having this for Faith Reps or anyone interested in U18 ministry takes the mystery and the fear out of these activities and is a great resource to build on going forwards.

RENEWAL DAY: SUPPORTING RE TEACHERS & CHAPLAINS



In October we supported our Diocesan Post-Primary RE Advisor, Olivia Elliott (also a member of the Strategic Task Force) in hosting our second **REnewal** Conference for Post-Primary RE Teachers, Chaplains and TY Coordinators at Glencomeragh House. Nodlaig presented their Ascend resources for RE classes and Gerard Hanley from Alpha Youth Ireland presented the updated Alpha Youth series and Sr Maureen Fitzgerald ASCJ presented on interesting ways to engage young people in faith matters. It was really special to hear from teachers at Ardscoil na Mara and Presentation Clonmel about initiatives running in their schools too. Our third **REnewal** conference will be 16th October - a great way to build links with our schools!

Photos: Some of the **REnewal** Day 2024 Attendees & members of the Strategic Task Force for Youth & Young Adult Ministry

ASCEND RESOURCES



As well as presenting to our own RE Teachers, Nodlaig was also asked to present on Ascend resources in the **DIOCESE OF CORK & ROSS** and the **ARCHDIOCESE OF TUAM** this year. It's always a pleasure to meet RE teachers from around the country and share free resources to help meet their needs and the response has been overwhelmingly positive, thank God with the resources being lauded as authentic, invaluable and relatable! Olivia Elliott was also asked to present on Liturgy in School at the Tuam Day and also received great feedback on her input.



Each week during term time, Faith@Home Family Newsletters, Let's Dive In Children's Resource, and To the Heights Youth Resource are created, uploaded to the Diocesan website and emailed to hundreds of subscribers. As well as this, Ascend Resource Packs are created to provide more meaty resources on a variety of topics, particularly saints and liturgical seasons. All can be downloaded from www.waterfordlismore.ie/youth-ministry

New resource packs have been recently updated / created on Beginning of School Year Ideas, Graduation Resources, Exam Liturgy Resources, Carlo Acutis, Pier Giorgio Frassati and many, many more. All of these are available to download from www.waterfordlismore.ie/youth-ministry and it's really encouraging to receive emails from teachers and pastoral workers in the diocese, nationally and abroad who use these too.

STRATEGIC PLAN PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Father of Kindness, You have created the hearts of our young people to know, love and serve You. We thank You for blessing us with the privilege of intentionally walking with them on their journey of faith and offering meaningful opportunities to encounter Jesus in their lives. Jesus, grant that we may reflect You and Your love to all we encounter. You are the Way for those who need guidance. You are the Light in the darkness for those who are lost. You are the Truth that cuts through the confusion and doubt. Holy Spirit, guide our thoughts, words, actions and intentions, that all we do may be for the greater glory of God. Mother Mary, be a mother to our youth and let them feel the warmth of your maternal embrace. We ask this through the intercession of St John Paul II, St Pier Giorgio Frassati, St Carlo Acutis, Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, St Declan, St Carthage, St Otteran, St Ita, Our Lady of Knock, St Joseph and St John the Evangelist. Amen.



COLLABORATING WITH LSRS AND PARISH SECRETARIES



It was a privilege for Nodlaig to speak at each of the three LOCAL SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVE TRAINING DAYS this year to provide and update on what is currently happening in Youth Ministry in the diocese, and highlight key areas where the support of an LSR is so important to supporting young people in our parishes.

Along with this Nodlaig was able to present to PARISH SECRETARIES from around the Diocese in January, again highlighting key ways that youth ministry and parish secretaries can work together to get good news to young people in our parishes. Both provided a welcome opportunity to personally thank people for their support for young people on the ground in parishes. Working together collaboratively is a key aspect of Ascend Youth & Young Adult Ministry!

YOUTH 2000 SUMMER FESTIVAL

YOUTH LEADING YOUTH TO THE HEART OF THE CHURCH!



SOME OF THE DIOCESAN GROUP WHO ATTENDED THE Y2K SUMMER FESTIVAL - IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET EVERYONE FOR THE PHOTO THAT DAY!



It was wonderful to have a strong contingent from the Diocese at the National Youth 2000 Summer Festival held in Newbridge College from 7th - 10th August. Holy Family Mission presented two workshops, Sr Kathryn Press facilitated a workshop on Religious Life, Bishop Phonsie hosted conversations at a Vocations stand, Sr Rebekah Marie (Sisters of Mary Morning Star) gave a keynote input on Living the Christian Life and Ascend Youth Ministry was represented by a stand. It's always a joy to meet people and hear, "there's a lot going on in your diocese." When you're in the thick of it at times, it doesn't always seem like that, but it was encouraging to meet people using Ascend Resources in their classrooms right across the country!

Youth 2000 is a national Catholic movement in existence in Ireland for over 35 years and aims to bring young people aged 16 - 35 to the heart of the Church.

FROM THE DIOCESE OF WATERFORD & LISMORE

DISCOVERING THE SACRAMENTS

TUESDAYS
8:00 - 9:30 PM
AGE 18+

18 & 25 FEBRUARY | 4 & 11 MARCH

WE'LL WATCH A SHORT VIDEO FROM ASCENSION PRESS AND HAVE TIME FOR DISCUSSION, CLOSING IN PRAYER.

REGISTER TO RECEIVE THE ZOOM LINK.
EMAIL WATERFORD@ASC-JUS.ORG
OR TEXT SR. KATHRYN: +353 87 404 2784

<https://waterfordlismore.ie/jubilee2025/>

POWER AND GRACE JUBILEE SERIES

Ascend Youth & Young Adult Ministry collaborated with the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to host a Jubilee zoom series on the sacraments, "Power and Grace". Dividing the attendees into breakout groups, we were thrilled to have two young adults who have been involved with ministry in the diocese step up to lead the Young Adult breakout room themselves. The four week series offered a deeper look into the sacraments, strengthening the faith of those involved and leading them to question their own experiences and how they encounter God through the sacraments in a new way.



OTHER GOOD NEWS STORIES FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE



PRAYER IN SCHOOLS

Great work is ongoing in schools right across the diocese. For example, Ardscoil na Mara teacher, Rachel Fleming, has been running a lunchtime prayer group in her school for a number of years now, which the students say is such a benefit to them. Amelia, 6th year, who travelled to Medjugorje with us put it simply: "Every school should have a prayer group!". They meet together, pray and read the Bible, and perform little acts of kindness and charity in their school, as well as having an annual retreat day together, fostering young leaders in a Catholic school setting.

HOLY FAMILY MISSION



LEADING RETREATS

Holy Family Mission continue to run Confirmation retreats for schools throughout the diocese as well as Post-Primary retreats for schools within and outside the diocese also. Their retreat team is very much in demand each year, so bookings need to be made early!

PRESENTING AT JUBILEE OF PRIESTS EVENT IN ROME & MEETING POPE LEO XIV!

Hundreds of Priests and people involved in priestly formation and Vocations took part in a Conference in Rome on June 26th, "Joyful Priests: I have called you friends", organised by the Dicastery for



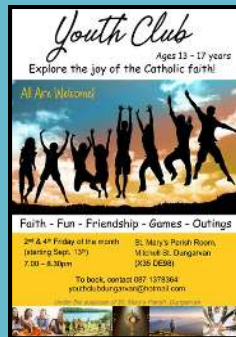
the Clergy as part of the Jubilee of Priests. Ireland was represented at this international event through the work of Holy Family Mission in Waterford and Lismore Diocese. Co-founder Maura Murphy spoke of their experiences in forming young adults and in particular the best practices they had seen bear fruit with young people and vocational accompaniment. Maura had the great honour of meeting Pope Leo and sharing briefly on the mission of Holy Family Mission. His face lit up when she mentioned Vocations to religious life and he said that their mission to young people "is at the heart of the Church". More info: www.holyfamilymission.ie

SHARING THEIR STORIES...



HFM's Testimony Series ran again last Spring, and to hear young people share about how God has worked in their lives, check out their YouTube channel!

YOUTH GROUPS



Under 18 Youth Groups have been running successfully in St Oliver's Parish Clonmel and St Mary's Parish, Dungarvan, providing friendship, fun and faith formation for young people in the areas. A good number of Faith Reps are involved with running these groups, as well as Alumni from Holy Family Mission, and Sisters of Religious Family of the Incarnate Word - so it's great to see the connections being made!



CREATION SURF RETREATS & CAMP

Creation Surf Retreats for Post-Primary Schools and Community Groups, and Creation Surf Camp have really taken off this year in Tramore, providing a natural blend between the great outdoors, reflecting on the existence of God and the beauty of His creation, and moments of prayer too.



YOUNG ADULT GROUPS



The UPPER ROOM GATHERING for Young Professionals ran very successfully last year as young adults gathered at Holy Family Mission once a month on a Monday night for a talk, followed by Adoration and Mass, then tea and chat into the wee hours of the morning!

LIGHT THE FIRE Young Adult Group in Clonmel has been running for two years now and meets once a month on a Wednesday.

ENLIGHTEN, a young adult Lectio Divina based group facilitated by the Sisters of Mary Morning Star ran last Spring in the city.

LOURDES DIOCESAN YOUTH HELPERS



A great group of 35 enthusiastic Transition Year / Fifth Year students from across the diocese, volunteered for the 2025 Lourdes Pilgrimage. Their kindness, warmth, joy and exuberance were extremely evident throughout the 5 days. Many pilgrims commented on how much the youth added to the pilgrimage for them personally. They were accompanied by 7 leaders, two of whom are seminarians for our diocese, currently studying in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. It was a beautiful and blessed few days; with most hoping to return in the future. The intentions of all who had made it possible for them to travel, and all who asked for prayers, were remembered at the Grotto and the daily Masses.