St Bernard’s High School
A Catholic Academy for Arts and Science

St Bernard of Clairvaux

Newsletter 2 – Spring Term 2016
Dear Parents,

It is with great sadness that I am writing to you today, to convey the news that Sister MARY Stephen passed away early on Friday 20th January, 2017.

Sister Mary Stephen had been ill for some time, but remained an important part of the Bernardine community in Brownshill, Stroud. She was a former student here at St Bernard’s and went on to become Head Teacher. Although I never had the privilege of meeting her, it is clear that she was dear to many former students and staff.

Sister Mary Stephen’s funeral took place on Wednesday 25 January in Stroud and our school was represented. There will be an appropriate opportunity for a celebration of Sister Mary Stephen’s life and contribution to our school after the half term holiday. Further details will be announced shortly.

Sister Mary Stephen would be proud of all that our students achieve today, both in and outside the classroom. There are many examples of such achievement to celebrate in this edition of our newsletter, and I hope you enjoy reading about the experiences and accomplishments that enrich our school community.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

Mr A Sharpe
Head Teacher
Spiritual

THE IMPORTANCE OF A FAITH JOURNEY

By Jessica Hudson, Year 13

A wake-up call for faith

To conclude, the Year of Mercy is a wake-up call, to the whole world to show them that people need to act on the problems that we are faced with. In the same way, the common good refers to people helping each other and showing awareness towards the needs of others as well as our environment. A clear link between the Year of Mercy and the common good is that we should not feel obliged to carry out good deeds, but as Christians we should want to help out and make the world a better place. God does not want us to feel that we have to be good citizens and have respect, but that it should be one of top priorities during our religious journey towards a more rewarding life.

THE YEAR OF MERCY & HOW IT FITS WITH THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE COMMON GOOD

By Niamh O’Riordan-Mitchell, Year 13

The Common Good, a key concept in Catholic Social Teaching, has informed Church Action on a range of spiritual and practical issues, including that of poverty, and seeks to promote what we could term ‘the Good Society’. This clearly relates to, and can reflect, the theme of mercy being explored in the Catholic Church’s work throughout this year.

Pope Francis emphasizes again and again that it’s only mercy that can challenge the ‘globalized indifference’ that enables injustice and mercilessness to carry on. He sees a loving, personal responsibility as the foundation for the Common Good. It requires opening our minds and hearts to the dignity of every human person, including those with whom we disagree. Asking us to do is to offer a handshake, not a handout, to struggling families and communities, and work with them, not for them, to empower and encourage their own leadership.
When the ‘soft power’ of mercy gets involved, the messy and beautiful reality of humanity is revealed, and it becomes clear that the Common Good is a practice which requires us to balance competing interests through constant renegotiation: between marginalized and powerful, left and right, faith and secular, educated and uneducated, consumers and shareholders, management and employees, urban and rural, old and young. The Common Good is not a fixed set of conditions, a utopian ideal to be imposed by one enlightened group upon another. It is about working out those conditions together. That means brokering relationships between those who hold different views and traditions, both political and cultural.

If we are to succeed in a new settlement for the Common Good, then we will all need to put our shoulders to the wheel and work together. The churches of all denominations, especially the laity, are well-placed to be at the heart of the solution, if we get out of our comfort zones, face outwards and open up to unlikely partnerships, and commit ourselves to bridge building – in our parishes, workplaces, in our social, political, economic and cultural life.

In an increasingly fragmented, unequal and divided society like ours, there is nothing more important than the reconciliation of estranged interests for the Common Good – it is an outworking of mercy, which, integrated with our spirituality and vocation, turns our desire for justice into a highly personal mission.
Donations for CAFOD and HARP are very important because we are taking responsibility for those in greater need than ourselves. Our society today has seen a much greater demand for showing compassion towards others. For example, there are many different types of apples, and just like human beings, they’re all different on the outside.

The Parable of the Sower is a famous reading from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) and it talks about seeds being sown and how they land in different places. Some land in good soil and get the opportunity to grow, whilst others are hindered. This relates to us as humans, as some of us get good opportunities to flourish, whilst others are disadvantaged and don’t.

When we hear ‘disadvantaged’, we naturally tend to think about starving people in, for example, Africa. But we forget about those suffering in our own community. We’ve all seen them, but we pretend that we don’t.

Harvest time gives us the opportunity to help those seeds who are more disadvantaged than ourselves in both our local community and worldwide. We have provided money for CAFOD and food for HARP so they can continue to help these people. We believe this is a valuable contribution to our community. But that’s just our opinion. What’s yours?

Contact us with your opinion at studentsscream@gmail.com
MESSAGE TO PARENTS

By Mrs Krone, School Business Manager

I’ve just spoken to a lady in reception who is a cyclist and she wondered if a message could be sent out to parents about dropping off their children as on a couple of occasions recently, cars have stopped and doors have been opened suddenly with no regard to cyclists on the road and although she was fortunate enough to stop in time, she said it will only be a matter of time before an accident happens.

KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE

By Mrs Allen, Deputy Head Teacher

I would like to remind parents and students about the importance of personal safety, especially on the way home from school. When walking home, students should always put their phones away and not be distracted, especially when crossing at busy roads. In addition, it is sensible to go in groups of two or more, wherever possible. If someone approaches them, students should report it immediately. The school has excellent safeguarding processes, recognised by the recent Ofsted Inspection, and that is precisely because we are vigilant.
St George’s Church Justice and Peace Youth Group, now in our third year, have organised several fundraising events and supported various charities, local and national. At this time of year, we normally support the homeless organisation Harp – we had two sleep-outs and a charity walk and have been very fortunate to raise quite a substantial amount of money in the past two years. We also support other causes and sometimes hold after Mass coffee mornings for various other charities.

During our meetings, we have watched videos about migrants, the homeless and sick and discussed what we could do to help. We saw the truth about people’s attitude towards them, just ignoring it as it’s not their problem. After our latest sleep out about a month ago, we raised more than £1,000 so far having more donations/sponsors to come in. The money will be shared between the homeless charity HARP and the food banks around Southend.

The sleep out was rough! Our group ages between 12-18 years with a variety of backgrounds. It was extremely fun to hang out with friends for the night and morning after and having loads to eat. During the night, we had a 30-minute mini mass session with Father Brett (our Priest), full of thoughtful prayers and calming hymns. On the other hand, after a night of laughter and games, at about 1am most people had settled into their sleeping bags on the cold hard ground. Half the group slept outside and the others slept inside the Church hall with the door wide open to keep the cold atmosphere alive. It was freezing, uncomfortable and my idea of hell. Everyone couldn’t sleep, people kept getting up, which made it possibly the longest night of our lives. By 7am we gradually got up for breakfast, so exhausted and with a cold. Now we have learned not to take things for granted, and we are so grateful for our warm and wonderful houses, no matter how big, and cosy, comfy beds to sleep in.

It makes you think how lucky we are to have a sustainable way of living and no major financial difficulties compared to those living on the streets. We are so fortunate so we need to act on it.
MORAL BEACONS IN THE SIXTH FORM

By Mr Walls, Assistant Head Teacher

The annual Sixth Form Awards Celebration took place in December during the penultimate PSHE lesson of the term. It was a pleasure to share the successes and achievements of so many of our sixth form students. The celebration began with the Head Teacher address and followed with the formal presentation of subject certificates. These were awarded for excellent attainment, progress made and impact on the life of the teaching groups.

The next set of awards were presented by Mrs Maltby, Mrs Bell and Mrs McCurdy and have a special significance at the school since they are given for acts of service in Music, Drama and Religious Education. The Bernardine tradition of ‘Service’ is at the very heart of the ethos of the school and is actively alive in the actions of the sixth formers. Finally, Mrs Berridge had the pleasure of presenting the Old Girls’ Award for consistent effort, before acknowledging the Head Student Team with awards named after three past Head Teachers: Sister Mary Aelred, Madame Mildred and Miss O’Shaughnessy.

At the end of the celebration we all reflected on the impact these students have had on the life of the entire school and the fact that they are role models and moral beacons for the younger students. The impact has, indeed, been wide and substantial. Significant charitable works have been organised by the sixth formers, demonstrating the school’s wider commitment to the community, both near and far. In addition, they have shown terrific leadership in a variety of capacities, leading the School Council, participating in the preparations for the Passion Play and leading the liturgical assemblies for the five Houses, to name a few.

During the event, we were entertained by Alice Eve playing the violin and the Sixth Form Vocal Group so thanks must be extended to them all.
Excellence in Sports

If your daughter/son is competing at a high level of competition for a sport or dance and you have not received a letter about the Excellence in Sport group, could you please contact Mrs Wood by letter stating the sport/dance, level of competition and number of training hours per week.

PE Kit

We have had a very positive start to the year with the majority of students remembering the correct PE kit for every lesson. To ensure these high standards continue can we remind you that students should be wearing trainers, as these are more supportive, not plimsoles. In addition, their white sport socks should cover their ankles and not be trainer socks. Finally, it is vital that all items of your daughter’s PE kit, and school uniform, are labelled so that misplaced items can be returned to the owner. Thank you for your continued support with these.

Netball at Our Lady of Ransom

On 20th October, students from St. Bernard’s helped organise a netball tournament at Our Lady of Ransom, continuing our community support activities, as well as developing student leadership skills.
Cross-country at Thorpe Hall

Once again, the cross-country team did themselves proud at the annual local event, which took place at Thorpe Hall School on 21st October.
SPORTS / DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARDS EVENING

By Mr Walls, Assistant Head Teacher

On Wednesday 2nd November, the annual event celebrating the sporting and Duke of Edinburgh achievements of our students took place. It was so very pleasing to see over 400 people in the Bernardine Hall taking time out to acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments of our sporting talents. As they entered the hall they heard some familiar sporting tunes: from Pot Black to Ski on Sunday and were able to see a selection of sporting and D of E photographs.
Mrs Clancy, who is the lead for the Duke of Edinburgh at the school, spoke passionately about the learning and commitment of the students taking part in the D of E Award, their resilience and fortitude and their dedication. These themes were taken up by our guest speaker, Jane Bell, who this year became the first person to swim the length of Lake Windermere on backstroke and the 52nd person in history to conquer the 21.6 mile length of Loch Lomond.

Jane’s outlook and contributions to the evening were well-received, demonstrating that ordinary people can achieve the extra-ordinary. The students below were photographed after the event with their trophies for special achievement: Ava King, Annalisa Marano and Katherine Newton.

At the end of the evening a luxury food hamper was raffled and won by one of the students in Year 8.

These events demonstrate not only the success of students, but also the hard work and dedication by parents and staff throughout the year. In addition, nights like this are simply not possible without the professionalism of all concerned with the organisation of the actual evening: catering, the premises team, flower arrangers, technicians, administration, as well as curriculum staff. I am grateful to all for their contribution, which reflects so vividly the inclusive Catholic ethos of St. Bernard’s.

The following prayer was said at the start of the evening, reminding us that whatever our abilities and skills, these come from God:

God, let me participate fully and fairly.  
Help me to learn something that matters once the game is over.  
Let competition make me strong but never hostile.  
Always let me help my opponent up.  
Never catch me rejoicing in the adversity of others.  
If I know victory, allow me to be happy;  
If I am denied, keep me from envy.  
Remind me that sports are just games.  
Let me use my God-given talents to be a good team player,  
A resilient individual and an effective participator.  
If through sport and leadership skills I set an example,  
Let it be a good one.  
I ask this through Christ, Our Lord.
The Year 11 Leadership Conference, for Girls by Girls, took place on November 18th, 2016. I would like to congratulate the Senior Prefect Team who worked tirelessly and independently for almost a year to produce an inspiring and empowering day for their peers – it was also thoroughly enjoyable. The day started in true conference style with teas, coffees and pastries followed by the conference proper held in the Bernadine Hall. The students had prepared a thought-provoking quiz and invited three diverse and interesting keynote speakers, each with a different story to tell. To keep us all engaged they created a varied programme of talks, chat show style questioning hosted by Melissa and Aoibh, short video clips and performances by the Jack Petchey ‘Speak Out’ Challenge regional finalists. We were very honoured to welcome Becky and Olivia from Southend High School for Girls and Tabitha from the King Edmund School, as well as Agnas and Elizabeth, the regional finalists from St Bernard’s.

Following break the year group split into ten different groups to take part in a rotation of workshops. Two Year 12 students presented a history workshop, created last year for their own conference, Kelly Reynolds, the community and education manager from Southend Theatres, ran a drama workshop and further sessions took place and were delivered by Year 11s involving science, t-shirt printing and a talent show. The sports leaders in the year group also put on some energising sports workshops.

Lunch was a shared affair, presented by the Year 10s, and then the Year 11s really let their hair down. DJ Ava had put together a play list of songs themed around empowerment for the year group to enjoy: there was some serious dancing and it was a joy to see our students and those from other schools celebrating together. A performance of Bollywood dancing brought the conference to a successful conclusion and the students left full of ideas and excitement.
I would like to thank Amanda Restell of the Amanda Restell Academy of Dance, Donna Roche of Hunt Roche Estate Agents and Sorcha Elliot, Clinic Director at Maldon Chiropractic, for giving up their valuable time, speaking so engagingly to their audience and answering some tricky questions with such consideration. Thanks also to Kelly Reynolds for her continued support of the girls’ ventures.

YEAR 11 STUDENT LEADERS

Being creative
By Melissa Morley

The focus of the Leadership Conference was powerful women and their talents and the event really did make me realize that women can do anything and just as well as a man. A great deal of preparation went into the organization of the day and there were many obstacles to overcome. Being a host of the chat show to the keynote speakers, and running my own workshop, I had to organize a lot: leading the t-shirt workshop meant I really had to pull through my creative side, making a vast amount of stencils; hosting the chat show, alongside Aoibh Pozar, meant consideration of a range of questions to ask our keynote speakers, so that the audience were able to learn all aspects of being a powerful, successful business woman. Personally, I was very nervous hosting the chat show; however, once meeting all the keynote speakers I felt much more relaxed and confident.

Changing the lives of women today
By Roisin Irvine

The Conference started off by considering how far women have come to achieve equality and, unfortunately, how there is still an uphill battle to achieve a truly equal world. After receiving some inspirational words from ex-student Helen Mirren, several keynote speakers were invited to share their keys to success as women in a seemingly unfair society. Each speaker told us, with great interest, how we should handle any struggle we may encounter during our lives. A mixture of internal and external students performed motivational speeches on a multitude of subjects for the Jack Petchey award. Various workshops ensued, with diligent Year 11s leading us in activities, each workshop holding its own important and inspiration: from promoting the game-chasing presence of women in science to presenting all the pivotal points in history that changed the lives of women today.
Empowerment of women  

By Georgina Read

The aim of the day long Leadership Conference was empowering women. I attended three workshops and my favourite was T-shirt printing as we were able to create our original T-shirts. The Year 11 leaders had prepared T-shirts, paints and sponges so we could decorate our T-shirts. They suggested we printed the T-shirts with inspirational quotes or something to symbolise the empowerment of women. I enjoyed this activity because it reminded me of the great things women have achieved in the past. I chose the quote “she believed she could, so she did” because it reflects how women can do anything they want to. Also, I think making T-shirts was a great idea as many of us wore them for the rest of the day. This proved how proud we are to be confident women and definitely fulfilled the purpose of the day.

Having a positive attitude & overcoming obstacles  

By Hetty Standing & Laura Wicker

The most enjoyable part of the day was listening to the keynote speakers. They were very interesting & inspiring and gave some great advice for the future. For instance, they were all women who had worked their way to becoming managers of a range of different businesses, such as a dance academy, chiropractors and estate agents. They all talked about the fact that they didn’t go on to do the job they originally wanted to do and had made changes along the way that made them realise that maybe a different job was what they really wanted to do. The talks showed us that even if we don’t know what kind of job we would like in the future, we do not need to worry because as we change as people the kind of job we would like to do may change too. All the speakers were clear that hard work and a positive attitude will help you find your path at work. They encouraged us to be more confident and overcome any obstacles to achieving our dreams. As adolescents, we face a lot of challenges every day and, to hear people explain how they overcame their personal struggles and
succeeded in getting the career and life they wanted, it was very motivational. It was reassuring for those of us who worry about the future to know that everyone faces obstacles in life and, even though we don’t think so at the time, we can overcome them. We knew that there will always be people out there who don’t approve of our choices in life and who want to stop us from being who we want to be, but we learnt that we can be strong and achieve our dreams anyway.

**Practical information**

By Hannah Alexander

My favourite part was of the day was listening to the women who had already experienced school and how they got to where they are today because listening to their stories inspired and comforted me: all of them had faced struggles before their job today and worked incredibly hard. Certainly, this provides reassurance to all Year 11s that whatever we may do in the future, we will be faced by hard times but we can get through it. I remember that one of the speakers faced conflict on the fact that she wanted to be a dance teacher, but it was seen as a hobby rather than a proper job, but we learnt that today she has a dance school with many students attending the academy. The keynote speakers didn’t just provide comfort but also practical information on how to choose our future after Year 11. The main advice was to choose a path that you enjoyed, not just doing because you felt like you were compelled to do so.
Cultural

PHYSICAL THEATRE

By Katriona Stidson & Alice Eve, Year 13

On Wednesday 19th October, St Bernard's was proud to welcome the internationally renowned physical theatre company, Frantic Assembly. Years 12 and 13 dance and drama students participated in a workshop which was primarily movement based and focused on the skills and techniques used to devise physical theatre.

Our workshop with Steve, the representative from Frantic Assembly, allowed us to develop our physical and ensemble skills. We all gathered in the dance studio where Steve introduced himself. We began with a warm up to prepare us for the demanding physical exertion of the day to follow. We participated in various exercises, including: movement to dance, and games to test our concentration and reactions. We learnt new skills which we can incorporate into our 'A' Level drama courses such as: lifts, chair duets, and expressing dialogue through movement. Although the morning challenged us mentally as well as physically, we all gained a greater understanding of the acting world. It also inspired many of us to incorporate the new ideas in our upcoming assessments and practical exam, allowing us to enhance our performance and writing skills.

In the afternoon, we were introduced to one of Frantic Assembly’s most wide known techniques; chair duets. They involve choreographing movement around two fixed chairs, including lifts, counter balances and sustained physical contact with partners. We went on to develop these, making longer performances, including other couples and different versions of our original duets. It was great to have an opportunity to learn this performance technique from one of Frantic’s own choreographers, as we can implement it into our devising work in the future! If you’re interested in seeing examples of Chair Duets, you can find versions of them on YouTube.

In the final part of the afternoon we were introduced to choreography and movement sequences that are used in The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time - a play directed using Frantic Assemblies ideas. Having watched the play in 2014 and being hugely inspired, it was very exciting to be part of a workshop which explored in particular the Paddington Station Scene. We learnt group lifts such as the Callippo and the flying man, and recreated a scene from the show, before dividing into two groups to create short scenes conveying the hectic station atmosphere, as seen through the eyes of a young boy.
CAROL CONCERT

By Mr Walls, Assistant Head Teacher

The annual carol concert took place on Thursday 8th December at the Avenue Baptist Church and the students were a real credit to their parents, the school and themselves. We were treated to some ‘old familiars’ and some new editions to the repertoire of the school choir and orchestra, once again conducted magnificently by Mrs Maltby. The hard work and effervescent energy of the choir ensured a magical evening in the run-up to Christmas, with parents, staff and the wider community reflecting on the real story of Christmas. Towards the end of the concert Alice Eve, Deputy Head Student, spoke for everyone when she conveyed the thanks to all those staff who worked tirelessly working with and helping to prepare the students. Mr Sharpe acknowledged the support of the Baptist community, led by Mr Andrew Picton, the Minister at Avenue Baptist Church. The venue is a special one and helps both faiths join together in a commitment of unity in praising God.

A Message from Mrs Maltby

A huge thank you to all our musicians for their hard work in making the Carol Concert so special. The range of musical talent is wonderful and St Bernard’s students are so willing to participate in extra-curricular work over the term. The support and commitment shown by the Choir, Chamber Choir, Orchestra, Vocal and Instrumental Groups is outstanding. In particular, I would like to thank the Sixth Form students who helped organise the event. Their support is very much appreciated.
ITALIAN EXCHANGE

By Year 8 students

Hetty Hindle-Logue, Darcey Gilbert, Paige Cardenas & Natalia Serrano Aguilar

When we went to Italy on the exchange trip it was so much fun and we were welcomed into the Italian homes as if they were our own. The food was amazing and they took us out and really treated us well. The traditional Italian foods, like pasta, cheese, spaghetti and pizza were divine. The experience helped us all learn more about Italy itself, the culture and the language. We went to a lot of museums and cathedrals and discovered more about the history. The trip enabled us to meet some amazing people and we made some life-long friends. We went out with our pen-pals to their usual meeting places, met their friends and played together on wii. Many of us hope to go again to Italy in the near future. The trip enabled us to go to places like Matera and see the fantastic sights. Indeed, we went to places we could only have imagined before. On the last day we went to church with our pen-pals. Walking in we were given a pouch for the collection money and whilst there a baptism was taking place, so we were able to experience this sacrament in a different cultural setting. In the church the singing of the hymns was really upbeat and the whole atmosphere seemed different. In the church a great many children attend the Mass on their own and it was a great experience.

The opportunity to learn another language is very important, but so too is the opportunity to experience a different culture. The Italian culture is very different to the British. The Italian people eat a lot at lunch and not so much at breakfast. The school children did not wear school uniform and they also have school on Saturdays! Everything was a new experience. We visited different towns and villages, many small but so special. One such place was Alberobello which was like being in a fairy-tale. The place where we resided was called Altamura which is famous for its bread. Indeed, the food was incredible. The general view was ‘my first time in Italy, but not my last’.

Focaccia

Focaccia is flat oven-baked Italian bread which is similar in style and texture to pizza dough. It may be topped with herbs or other ingredients but not cheese. It usually has olive oil, herbs and tomatoes and the taste is delicious. The bread is soft. The oldest bakery in Altamura is called Dane di Altamura and still bakes this bread in the traditional way. The taste leaves you craving more! As one student put it: ‘This is true love’.