

animate

Newsletter youth

Welcome to our first official newsletter marking the new academic year 2025 - 2026!

Hopefully there are a few things which you will be delighted to catch up on. Our first term is one of our busiest terms but things get a little quieter in the December time - as well as colder!! 🥶

The house is all set up for our Christmas season, i've included a few photos below. Our morning and evening prayer routine changes for Christmas and we reflect on the Jesse Tree (ornaments and figures which guide us through Jesus' family tree).

We have never managed to finish the the full family tree reflection but we think this year is the year!!

We have two cribs in the house, one is placed in our Chapel with our Jesse Tree and the second one is placed downstairs in the centre of the house. This crib takes a lot longer to set up, you may be able to see why from the photo! But we hope guests and young people are impressed when they see it.



Christmas at Lowe House



*Fr Simon's Italian style crib.
Chapel Crib.*



Our downstairs crib.



Us, wishing you a Merry Christmas.



Jesse Tree.



Our Chapel.



Lourdes 2026

As this first term comes to an end it is probably fair to say that the majority of our Lourdes applications have come in. And we are pleased with the numbers that have come in. Although we are still down on the numbers we had in 2019, numbers have continued to grow each year since we had the enforced pilgrimage absence.

We are now well over 250 young people on the pilgrimage across the seven coaches that are travelling. What you may not know is that each coach has around seven staff members as well: one coach leader, one priest chaplain and five staff members. So we are well over the 300 mark for the youth pilgrimage as a whole. It is great to see such generosity from young people and staff members who commit to Lourdes each year.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage and we hope to make it a special one. And to mark the start of the 50th anniversary year we had an Early-Bird 50 Years – £50 discount offer.

The pilgrimage preparation season really begins in the New Year so expect to see and hear more about Lourdes in 2026.

There are still places available if you know anyone who would like to go to Lourdes, or if you know someone you feel would benefit from going, then really please do encourage them to apply.

And if you are reading this and would like to support the pilgrimage in some way we are aware that many young people are looking to fundraise to help them with costs. Perhaps, if you have contacts with a local school or parish you could ask if there is anything you could do to help young people in your area fundraise?



Faith in Action 2025 - 2026

Another year begins of the award. The award was originally introduced in our Archdiocese back in 2016, from there the award has grown and grown.

In 2016 we had 24 young people trialling the award, this year we will have our biggest amount of young people – 2,076!

I have sat down this year with each co ordinator, in total 63. This is an increase from last year of 18 new co ordinators. I hoped, (for my own sanity!) that the numbers would plateau at some point but how brilliant is it that this award every year is increasing. I think it is a remarkable statement to say that 2,076 young people are actively living out their faith in our Archdiocese.

This number of course is going to increase as the deadline for signing up is in January.

It will be the official 10th Anniversary for the award this year and it was my own plan to mark this occasion by doing something special, but I was unsure what that might be. Sadly, we had the sudden passing of a moderator and volunteer of the award in October, Stella Gore (Fr Simon's mum) who had the same plan in mind it seems!

In memory of Stella, it has allowed a higher budget for this year, which means that through her own actions each young person will be receiving a free badge, not only this but a free ice cream and goodie bag for those young people who will be attending one of the three award ceremonies this year.

If you had the pleasure of knowing Stella, you would know that personal recognition really wasn't her thing! But through her own plan, she has allowed this to happen for each young person and for that it is a huge blessing for our Archdiocese.



Youth Alive Mass

Although Lourdes preparation begins in earnest in the new year you could say the starting pistol of preparation for the coming pilgrimage is the winter Youth Alive Mass. In previous years we have had this Mass in Advent, but this year moved it forward to Youth Sunday (for the obvious reason of wanting to celebrate young people with us all together but also to mark the launch of the new year of Confirmation registration – which we will come to later).

This Mass is always a lovely one for all of us involved. We get to see familiar faces and catch up with old friends we may not have seen since the busy-ness of a new academic year sets in. But we also get a chance to see new faces who have heard about the Mass as they enter High School or move into the senior years at school and sign up for things like Lourdes or the FIA award or Confirmation.

The next Youth Alive is the Feast of Corpus Christi on the 7th June at 5:30pm here at Lowe House. You are very welcome to come along.



Retreats

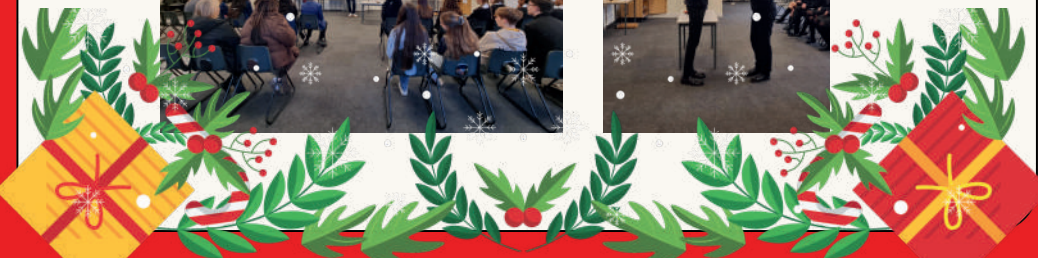
In the main we do work with older years – those in High School. But we do work with Primary Schools through the year, usually in the summer term as a kind of transition from primary to high school. However, we have had the opportunity to work with a few primary schools in this first term, which has been a nice change of pace for us in the early part of the year.

As mentioned in the Jubilee Year section, we created special Jubilee themed days for different year groups and primary was no exception. Our primary Jubilee day was based around being a pilgrim of hope and what we would need to be a pilgrim – so first of all a backpack, and then equipment for the journey. So we allowed the young people to think about what they need for their pilgrimage journey.

Eucharistic Ministers

Only a couple of weeks ago we held our annual training day for young people to be commissioned as ministers of Holy Communion. It is always a nice day for us to hold here in the house as we have young people from different schools and parishes coming together for a shared purpose. It is, perhaps, a reminder to them that the Church extends beyond their own school and there are young people like themselves offering themselves in service of the Church all across the diocese.

As we did last year, we held the day in the course of a school day so a school could bring their young people themselves rather than have the day on a weekend. The change seems to have been well received. We hope you might remember those young people who were commissioned in your prayers.



Jubilee Year

As you read this the Jubilee Year will be coming to an end. Thinking back well over 12 months to before the year began we wondered how best to mark the Jubilee Year here at Animate. The meaning behind the year seemed quite clear, but as clear as it might have been it also seemed difficult to translate into the work that we do here. So how could we make the year stand out?

We tried a few different things to make the year different. Maybe the main things to note were the additional retreats that we offered on specific themes to specific year groups. So higher years in High School were offered the opportunity to come along to a day on 'Vocation / Discipleship' – a day to think about the next stage of their journey. And younger years were given a chance to think about how we can be servant leaders. These days were offered free of charge to any small groups that might want to come along – a nod to the Jubilee Year idea of debt forgiveness.

And we also created a day just simply on the overall theme of a Jubilee Year, with any school that wanted that theme making a mark on our newly created Jubilee Year wall.



Music Ministry

One of the positive things about our Youth Alive Mass was to see our young people taking more responsibility for the liturgy and the music at Mass. As you know, last year we launched our diocesan music ministry group. I think we wanted to keep things as informal as we could and allow the spirit to guide us. And I think we have been guided in a certain direction now. We seem to have a core group that are meeting each time we gather, and we have other young people coming along when they can – which is fine. But as time has passed we have begun to build up a repertoire of hymns that the group are comfortable with and then expand on that selection. Which in turn meant that the group could suggest music and ideas for the Youth Alive Mass based on their own experience. And then lead some of the worship during Mass. This is, more or less, as we had hoped when we first started.

So if you know any young person from your local community: family, school, parish who might like to be involved then please point them in our direction. As we mention above, there is no commitment to come each time. We know young people have all kinds of commitments. But it can be nice for the young people that come along to meet each other and catch up and be able to chat with each other – so a bit like a social. As well, of course, as the music element to it all. There is no specific requirement for music ability. The main thing is to come along and have a go and see how we get on.



Sacrament of Confirmation

As mentioned briefly in the notes on the Youth Alive Mass, one of the reasons we moved the Mass to an earlier time in the year was to allow the Mass to highlight the opening of the Confirmation registration website. Based on feedback from previous years, the start of the 'Confirmation Season' has been moved earlier – and will finish earlier. So the website has been opened on Youth Sunday and will close at February half-term. This gives parishes / families of parishes / deaneries an extra month in the spring and summer terms to start their local preparation and have their Masses and Services.

So if you know anyone in Year 8 this year (or who may have missed out in the past few years so maybe still in High School?) then they can sign up at liverpoolcalled.co.uk and their local area will be in touch with them about what happens next around Easter time.

Ways to be involved

One of the reasons for this newsletter was to, first of all, spread the word about what happens in the diocese in youth ministry. So please pass this onto other people – forward the email or ask them to sign up themselves (email s.gore@animateyouth.co.uk) or even print this off and leave in the back of the Church – blame me if the parish priest complains!!!

But we also know that so many people want to support young people on their journey of faith but are not sure how to do that.

We hope that by showing you what happens now you might be able to see how you can help young people in the coming months.

A few examples could be:



Ways to be involved

Lourdes

Encourage young people to sign up for Lourdes 2026! It is the 50th anniversary of the youth pilgrimage so it is a great year to follow in the footsteps of older brothers and sisters, parents and even grandparents!

Faith in Action

We have been really pleased to see the award grow over the years. We are never sure if people realise that numbers that we have doing the award are so high. Although not a competition (!) most other dioceses in the country have a few dozen doing the award – and we have 1500.

It does create a problem for us, though. In order for the award to run as we would like we desperately need additional hands.

We need extra help to moderate (write a sheet to affirm the young person in what they have done through the year) and help on the award ceremony days (being around the site to ensure the safety of the young people).

If you have some free time in May / June please do get in touch and we can tell you more. Neither role is onerous and can be really life giving to see young people celebrated for what they have done. Again email admin@animateyouth.co.uk or call 01744 740461.



Ways to be involved

Youth Alive

We have two 'Youth Masses' (as much as that is not a great term to use as all masses are masses) this academic year, one which has now passed – 3rd November (Feast of Christ the King – Youth Sunday). Our second one will take place on 7th June (Feast of Corpus Christi) at 5:30, here at Lowe House. There is a social time after.

Please encourage young people to come along and meet other young people in the Church and at the social time after.

Music Ministry

Do you know any young people in your school, college, parish who are interested in music and would like to meet other young people and develop their skills in participating in and leading music and liturgy in general? Why not come along to the music ministry sessions we have lined up? See the earlier notice with dates for the sessions. We have young people from the Lourdes pilgrimage involved, young people who have been involved in their confirmation programme and young people in their own parish choir. It is for anyone who wants to meet other young people and learn and develop new skills.

Retreats

If you are involved in a school or college please do get in touch with us to see how we might be able to work together this year. We offer retreats for year 6 in primary school, and then for all years in high school and college. There is more information about what we do and what we can offer on our (new!) website.



Prayer



I thought I would give you one of our Jesse Tree reflections to help guide you on your own journey this Christmas.

2 Kings 5:1-14

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.

Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage.

Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!"

So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Elisha was the prophet who came after Elijah. Here he heals a foreign military leader of leprosy. Naaman has been sent to Elisha by a little Israelite slave girl.

At first he thinks it is beneath his dignity to do what Elisha says, but when he does he is healed.

God showed Naaman his deeper sickness and healed it – the sin of pride. Jesus came so God could heal his people's sinful hearts.

Perhaps this Christmas it is an opportunity to see the work of God in the small ways? The cards we receive and send as reminders of our connectedness – the time we spend with friends and family.

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Acct Name: AOL Animate Youth Account. Bank: HSBC

The purpose of this newsletter is not to ask for money! We know how hard it can for many of us at the moment. But if you did feel able to help contribute to the costs of running and maintaining our diocesan ministry to young people we would gratefully receive cheques or bank transfers

DONATE ♥

Cheques: AOL Animate Youth Ministries. Bank Transfer: Sort: 40-29-12. Acct: 62127423