

PRESS RELEASE: POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARD

DIOCESE OF WATERFORD AND LISMORE

**STUDENTS PILGRIMAGE TO ROME**

Last week, more than 180 young pilgrims from 11 dioceses across Ireland took part in the pilgrimage to Rome, including 15 from the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore with staff and students from Blackwater Community School in Lismore. Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry and Patron of the Pope John Paul II Award, led the pilgrimage, joined by youth leaders and priests from the participating dioceses.

During their visit, the group undertook a walking pilgrimage of the ‘seven churches of Rome’ led by Bishop McKeown as well as a night tour of the city, and visited the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican Museum and the Pontifical Irish College in Rome.

For the feast of All Saints, Bishop McKeown celebrated Mass with the pilgrims at Saint Peter’s Basilica under the Chair of St Peter. Afterwards the pilgrims participated in a procession at the tomb of Saint John Paul II and said prayers to the Saint whom the award is dedicated to in honour of his love and vision for young people.

The group later gathered at Saint Peter’s Square to pray the Angelus with Pope Francis, during which the Pope offered a special welcome to the pilgrims from Ireland. Of course being from Ireland, a singsong ensured with a great rendition of ‘Hail Glorious St Patrick’ for the Feast Day of All Saints. The day ended with a visit to the tomb of Saint Paul and evening prayer at the Cathedral of Saint Paul’s Outside the Walls.

Mass for All Souls was celebrated by the Diocesan coordinator Fr Michael Toomey at the Santa Maria degli Angeli. It included participation from the students from Waterford & Lismore, Ferns, Clogher and Elphin who were in his group.

Fr Michael said of the pilgrimage: “It was such a humbling experience to hear the witness of these young people- their thirst for God – their willingness to help and be part of their parish – and the challenges they face from others, including us priests, who they felt are often out of touch of their talents and gifts”.

Fr Michael was also enthused by the commitment of all those who took part, by stating: “As diocesan coordinator here in Waterford and Lismore, it gave me a great opportunity to further develop our award here, and nationally, and to continue our missionary work here in Ireland so all our young people find their voice, gifts and talents, and share them in their parishes and communities”.

The 180 pilgrims are made up of award participants from the last ten years from the dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnois, Armagh, Clogher, Cloyne, Derry, Dromore, Elphin, Ferns, Kilmore and Leighlin, Tuam and Waterford and Lismore.



Official Award Logo – which you have permission to use.