

With Easter fast approaching, we reflect on the Lenten journey that St Joseph's College has travelled through the course of Term Four.

There are many opportunities and activities for staff and students to live out the college motto of '*Laus Deo Semper*' (Praise God always, Psalm 31:4), as well as the call to be witnesses and disciples in this Year of Mission. A definitive description of all the activities is far from possible but what follows is an overview of some of the highlights of the previous six weeks.

Students have been regularly involved in enrichment activities such as the student St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) who visit the residents of the Kingsmead Care Home, to sing, play games and chat. Closer to home the gardening club "Eden Revisited" has not only taken root but is now blossoming. Staff and students work side by side to improve the school grounds and live out Pope Francis' message from *Laudato Si* on a renewed stewardship by growing flowers and vegetables for charity. Craft Club has continued to thrive and participated in the Lenten theme with the creation of Lenten lanterns.

The R.E. curriculum has also adapted to underpin the major themes and beliefs of Lent and the Year of Mission, which is rooted in the Gospel of Mark. Year 9 have studied key passages in St Mark's Gospel, which was written in the midst of the Roman persecution of the Early Church circa 65-70 AD.

Rise theatre group visited the college to mark the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Oscar Romero. Two performances were well received during the school day by Year Seven and Year Eight and a further performance for other students and guests was sold out in the evening.

The anniversary has also seen the creation of colourful "Romero Crosses" by Key Stage Three students to highlight the cause and life of soon-to-be St Oscar of San Salvador.

Oscar Romero in his life and his legacy embodied many of the ideals of CAFOD and in school the inspirational and crucial work carried out by CAFOD was recognised and supported within the community. The CAFOD fast day raised £450 and the CAFOD Young Leaders training for Catholic Schools in Clifton Diocese was hosted by St Joseph's on 20 March. Students partook in role-play games in fair trade economics and disaster relief in addition to receiving an inspiring presentation by a former Step in the Gap student who spent her summer in El Salvador.



The Kintbury retreat provided 11 students with a chance to experience “*Heaven on Earth*”. Kintbury is a well-known retreat centre in the beautiful Berkshire countryside run in the Lasallian tradition.

The season of lent is seen in the Christian calendar as one of the most solemn and reflective times of the year. There is, however, the joy of Easter to look forward to. The college has anticipated Easter with the donation and collection of over 200 Easter eggs from the students and staff of St Joseph’s. These chocolate treats are being distributed to the patients at the children’s’ ward in the Great Western and Swindon care homes.

The chapel has hosted reflections every Friday during lunch and tutor sessions on the Stations of the Cross and a reconciliation service was held on Friday 23rd March. The uptake for this was incredible with over one hundred students extending the event beyond the scheduled time. We thank Father Richard and Father Lucas of Holy Rood parish for their time and energy.

On the last day of term for students, a Passion play based on a contemporary reading of the Stations of the Cross was performed to the whole school in five sittings. Finally, on the final day of term for staff, there was a Maundy Thursday Divine Office service held for staff in the college chapel. This was led by Deacon Terry Aspell, also of Holy Rood round, and was a peaceful finish to a busy term for all.

