



Gen Zs Speak About FAITH

AMANDA GREGAN asked four young Catholics presenting at the recent Youth Festival to share about living their faith.

With over 650 participants, the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival of worship, discussion and performance took place under a beautiful blue Auckland sky in the first weekend of December. The Festival highlights included workshops on mission, digital disciples, human sexuality, the work of the Catholic faith community, the state of Earth and bishops' banter sessions. Cardinal John presided at Eucharist with a packed auditorium of young people on Saturday night and the much-anticipated concert of global Christian music sensation Matt Maher followed on Sunday evening. Young people from around the country filled the days with impromptu dancing, singing, celebration and a sense of community and joy.

Festival participants enjoyed a range of presenters and keynote

speakers who had a passion for their faith and for working with young people.

After the festival I asked a few of the presenters to share how their faith influences their lives.

Christina Shared

Christina Masae, a social worker in South Auckland, said:

"Like life, my faith has been a rollercoaster of a journey especially through my late teenage years. What living faith in my life comes down to is relationship and how we choose to meet, react and respond to the many different situations and people in our lives. When we meet people we have the decision to let worldly things come between making connections with each other and ourselves or become divided in the stigma that surrounds the different people of race, age and/or gender we meet. I'm no theologian but I know for certain God does not see me with all the stigma that comes with being a New Zealand-born Polynesian woman raised in West Auckland.

I strongly believe that how we

relate to others is the chance we have to share God's love. We don't have to mention God's name but when he is seen in our actions that is a proclamation of God's love in itself. In strengthening my relationship with God, I'm strengthening my relationship with myself, and in doing this, a deeper strength is created for myself to connect to others."

Therese Reflected

Therese Kiely reflected:

"For me living my faith is a combination of things. It's forming, developing and maintaining your relationship with God, others and yourself. From these relationships is the desire to seek understanding; if you don't understand what you believe, then why would you bother to come to church on a Sunday?"

"During the Festival, I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a workshop on God's Word and Catholic approaches to scripture and you could tell that people were having little 'a-ha' moments. I can only speak on the experience of our workshop, but many people throughout the weekend seemed to be storing away many thought-provoking and challenging tools to help them in their lives. A significant one in our workshop was the fact that Catholics do not take the Genesis creation stories literally as a historical account of the beginning of the universe. Although we can never fully understand God, seeking understanding of why we have these relationships and beliefs is of huge importance — otherwise they become irrelevant.

"It's about finding what your gifts are and using them in your face-to-face interactions with others. Keeping balance between these relationships for me is the fullest expression of living in the image of God both in and outside of Church."

Sam Responded

Sam Brebner, a presenter and participant, said:

"To live out faith in my life could be best summed up by a C S Lewis quote that sits on my bedside table. It

Amanda Gregan is Communications Advisor for the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.



reads: 'Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done.'

"First and foremost, my faith consists of relying on God. If you've ever found yourself in a situation where you had to rely on someone that you didn't have a good relationship with, you'll know it's a struggle. To truly rely on someone, you need to be in a relationship where you trust them. With that in mind, the foundation of my faith is turning to God in prayer each morning, reminding myself of God's love for me and placing my trust in God.

"Living my faith is something that begins again every day as if 'nothing had yet been done'. I do not think Lewis is saying that we should disregard all previous progress on our faith journey. Instead, he is reminding us that the most important day for living out our faith will always be today."

"Just because I was a good Catholic yesterday doesn't mean I can take a break from living my faith today! Yet there is also redemption in this world. No matter how badly I might have messed up yesterday, every day is a new chance to rely on God."



Maria Pondered

Maria Pauala works for the St Vincent de Paul Society and gave a keynote address at the Festival. She said:

"Living faith in my life means to me faithfully practising being present in the now, inviting stillness into my life, to every moment I can remember to. This is extremely important to me because we live in such a busy world in our personal, work and Church lives, that the practice of routinely inviting stillness into my day means that I am grounded within myself and able to hold a constant space of stillness inside me, while living out my day.

"When I am aware of and can hold and connect with a still grace space within me, while being side by side with any other human being, it allows said human being freedom to be as they are, accepted for who they are, however they are feeling in that moment, whether they be a young adult volunteer, a student young Vinnie, an elder Vincentian volunteer, a peer, a staff member, or for especially our whānau in need whom we seek to serve, kanohi ki te kanohi – face-to-face."

Keynote speaker Dewy Sacayan said: "If I could summarise the Festival in one phrase, it would be finding your identity. Personally, my identity as a Catholic was challenged many times throughout my life. For many of the

"I'm concerned about poverty because it comes from our cultural obsession with the pursuit of affluence. This both brings suffering into the lives of innumerable people and endangers the survival of all earthly life. Until we seek the common good before all else, poverty will continue to threaten us all."

Kevin McBride, Auckland

youth that attended the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival, the same story rings or will ring true if it hasn't already.

"Through the praise and worship led by Matt Maher and the energy of all those at the festival, I was so moved by the realisation that love for God trumps differences. And that bridges could be formed to remedy severed ties because, after all, we are all baptised in Christ.

"As youth we are called to use our creativity and vigour to act. I am hopeful that the Aotearoa Catholic Youth Festival sparked a flame of inspiration so that they can think widely and act locally." ■

IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY NZ

[previously ARRUPE NZ]

Schedule 2018

Home of Compassion, 2 Rhine St, Island Bay, Wellington

'Deep calls to Deep' – 3 day silent retreat May 25(9am)

- 27(4pm). If your heart is calling you to put down your technology, come aside, and take this opportunity to be silent, still and notice the deeper desires of your heart; then this retreat could be for you. Application open to all. Cost to be advised.

'A New Heart' – July 22 (7pm) 31 (9am). An 8-day silent individually guided retreat in the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. Application open to all. Cost to be advised.

'A Listening Heart' – November 18 (7pm)-27 (9am)

An 8-day silent individually guided retreat in the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola Application open to all. Cost to be advised.

'Attending to Holy Mystery' – September 21 (7pm)-28 (9am).

A 6-day silent individually guided retreat in the dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. Open to all. Cost to be advised.

'30 Day Retreat 2018' – The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. 9th November 2018 (7pm) - 11th

December 2018 (9am). An enclosed silent residential retreat at the Home of Compassion Retreat Centre Island Bay Wellington. *This retreat will be situated in the self-contained Crombie Centre which is private, quiet and close to an abundance of nature walkways.* A team of spiritual directors from Ignatian Spirituality NZ will facilitate this retreat.

**Further information and registration
for all retreats visit:**

www.ignatianspirituality.nz

or email info@ignatianspirituality.nz