



Papal Visit 2010

St Mary's Parish was well represented during September's visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United Kingdom. This special edition of the newsletter features the experiences and impressions of the visit from the viewpoints of several of our parishioners. Each attended in a different role and had a different perspective.

Westminster Cathedral & Hyde Park

by **Charlotte Burrell**,
(who attended as Parish Youth representative)

We started in Leeds at 10:30pm with a Mass then a midnight feast with LOTS of pizza. We then travelled through the night to London. At 7:00am we were standing outside Westminster Cathedral with young people from all over the country (it was very cold!) The Pope arrived at 10:00 and we took part in a Mass said by the Pope himself. The Pope then came out to greet us and gave a speech. We then processed through the streets to Hyde Park and waited for the Pope to arrive in the evening for the vigil. We had seats in Hyde Park quite near the front (we were the ones in yellow if you watched it on TV!) so we had quite a good view of what was going on. Once the Pope had left we travelled back to Leeds and I finally arrived home at 3:00am!

The highlights for me were when we were in Hyde Park; the atmosphere was amazing, particularly when the Pope arrived - everyone was so excited and singing and shouting - and when everyone prayed together in silence during the vigil it was so beautiful. The words that stood out to me most from what



Pope Benedict said are that love is very important, we were made to love and receive love and that love makes us who we are and brings happiness to people's lives. I feel that my faith has been strengthened because of this pilgrimage and that I have a better understanding of what and why I believe, particularly about the Blessed Sacrament and how important that is.

The Big Assembly Twickenham

by Lucy Root

On 17th September 2010 eight children and two members of staff from St Mary's School left Leeds at 2am on a coach and travelled with other children from the area down to London to "The Big Assembly" in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI. The rest of the school in Knaresborough watched "The Big Assembly" in the classrooms via the internet. It was a very long journey but an exciting one - no one had a lot of sleep!

Before the Pope arrived at St Mary's University College in Twickenham there was a "warm up" with Blue Peter presenter Andy Akinwolere, where we all joined in with singing exercises and other activities. There was a great deal of excitement about actually "being there"!

The Pope arrived in his Popemobile which did a lap of the sports field, where we all were, before parking next to the stage.

When the Pope got out everyone rushed to see him and cheered loudly. Children from England, Scotland and Wales presented the Pope with gifts, greeting him in English, Gaelic and Welsh. I couldn't really see the books, but I bet they were beautiful!

There was a link with a school in The Gambia where children learnt about each other - hopefully our Ghana group will have the same effect.



When the Pope spoke he said it is important to know what you want to be in life. He said that having fame and money is ok but on its own it is not enough to make us happy.

It felt like a dream on the day - maybe tiredness and excitement - but the special feeling I had on that day and now makes me realise how lucky I am to have seen, heard and received the blessing of the Pope.

The Choir Cofton Park

By Tom Brennan - he and Luke Broadhurst sang in the choir at the Beatification Mass

After months of rehearsals and lots of hard work-this was finally it; we were going to see the Holy Father!

Our day began bright and early, actually dark and very early; we had to be at St John Fisher's for 1.30am! We gathered in the school foyer, all sporting the distinctive bright yellow hoodies representing the Leeds Diocese. We were certainly easy to spot! After a long bus journey to Birmingham we arrived at Cofton Park in swirling rain that whistled around us and made the ground wet underfoot. Not the best thing when attired in slippery school shoes! Several security checks later we could see the huge stage that seemed to fill the horizon. We weaved and ducked around the tangle of wires and the mass of coaches-many of which were far more luxurious than ours! Rehearsals began in the rain at six in the morning. Finally it was time for the Holy Father to arrive. Twice we thought the

helicopter was arriving until finally, it landed and The Pope stepped out. The sky that had been heavy with rain cleared and became a glorious blue. The Holy Father's white robes appeared to shine!

As the Popemobile cruised slowly around the park, the cheering was deafening and the



congregation crushed to see. Up in the choir stands we had, perhaps, the best view.

During a magical mass the Pope talked about our need to work together in these tough times. We were part of the massed choir and the sound of the singing was very moving. Finally it was time to begin our journey home, the longest part of which was leaving Cofton Park. We arrived home, our exciting pilgrimage was over, but not forgotten.

Beatification Mass Cofton Park

By Enid Cox. Picture by Sandra McDermott

A 1.00 am start brought us to Cofton Park on a wet dawn, and by 8.10 am we were "live" on BBC Radio 4. We were facing the sanctuary beyond the popemobile carriageway and enjoying on-screen

views of helicopters, motorcade and popemobile. The sun burst through as Benedict XVI appeared in person.

Action began with Newman's "Praise to the holiest"; following the Kyrie, Archbishop Longley requested of Benedict the Beatification of our Venerable priest. The Pope's reply:

"We declare that John Henry Cardinal, Newman ...shall henceforth be invoked as Blessed and that his feast shall be celebrated every year on the 9th of October"

This signalled the

unveiling of Newman's portrait, the placing of his relics by the Altar, and "Praise to the Holiest" again, from an ecstatic multitude.

We had longed for this moment, and it was happening in Newman's beloved England! A brilliant acknowledgement, perhaps, of the half of his life given for the Church of England?

Newman's "Lead Kindly Light" was recalled in the Collect: *O God who bestowed on ... Blessed John Henry Newman, the grace to follow your kindly light and find peace in your church, graciously grant that through his intercession and example we may be led out of shadows and images into the fullness of truth.*

Newman was a classical scholar who conversed with continental clergy in Latin and it was fitting that we sang "Credo in Unum Deum" and heard Benedict's gentle voice offer Eucharistic prayer III in Latin. The offertory hymn was Newman's "Firmly I believe and truly."

Communion was received in orderly fashion from Ministers who spread throughout the Park, and this glorious Mass concluded with "For all the Saints."

At 12 noon we said the "Angelus" and heard the Pope's weekly address; then with his final blessing and last smiling wave, Benedict was gone.

Sport and the Catholic Church - surely not!

At the celebration of Catholic Education held at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, on Friday 17th September, Pope Benedict XVI launched the John Paul II Foundation for Sport. St Mary's parishioner Dr Mark Nesti, who is Reader in Psychology in Sport at Liverpool John Moores University, was invited to attend as a member of the newly formed Board of the Foundation. Mark is a chartered psychologist, and alongside his University work as a lecturer and researcher, he has worked as a sport psychology consultant with Olympic athletes, Premier League football teams and top sports men and women during the past 20 years. Speaking about his involvement with the foundation, Mark says that much of the impetus for this has come from the late Pope John Paul's well known love of sport, especially football and hill walking. The church set up

a sport section in the Vatican in 2004 to provide a way for scholars, sports leaders and others to help make their faith inform their experience of sport. The new Foundation will aim to serve sport at all levels from grass roots to elite and is particularly focused on what our Catholic faith can offer sport in relation to ethics, values, notions of fair play and character formation. Other members of the Board include Professor



Simon Lee (former Vice Chancellor of Leeds Met University) as chairman, Brian Kidd as vice chairman (former Manchester Utd player, now assistant manager at Manchester City), Jason Gardner MBE (Athens Olympic sprint relay gold medallist), Catherine Myers OBE (former head of Bishop Challoner Catholic School, Tower Hamlets) and 10 others with a wide range of experience and backgrounds in sport. Speaking about his excitement and the

honour of being involved in this new venture, Mark points out that sport for many, as participants or spectators, is one of the few experiences in our fast moving secular and materialist culture where people can live out notions of courage, selflessness, and solidarity with others, no matter the level of activity involved. Based on this notion, and that many of the top performers he has worked with have found that their faith,

whether Catholic, Muslim, or other traditions, helps them during their sport careers,

Mark founded the Centre for the Study of Sport and Spirituality at York St John University in 2003. Although this is no longer in existence, the work of the John Paul II foundation will hopefully be a place where Catholics, other Christians and people of different faiths and none, can benefit from ideas flowing from the many Papal pronouncements and accounts from Catholic philosophers and theologians on sport and the body over the past 70 years.