



The Twelve – Caritas Leeds -Youth Leadership Team

"You, dear young people, are not the future but the now of God."
Pope Francis, World Youth Day, Panama, 2019

Summary

This paper has the support of Bishop Marcus for the creation of a **Caritas Leeds Youth Leadership Team** made up of **12 young people from the Diocese of Leeds**. Taking their inspiration from the apostles, the team will be known as '*The Twelve*'.

Caritas Leeds will work with the Diocese of Leeds Youth Service to recruit and develop the group, so they effectively fulfil their role of collaborating with the Bishop, giving voice to young people in Diocesan decision making and contributing towards key events and activities aimed at young people.

The Twelve will be commissioned by the Bishop and formally recognised within the Diocese to aid their leadership development and recognition of their work in schools and parishes.

Background

At the 'Faith in Action: Joy and Challenge' day of reflection at Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College, lay and ordained Catholics were invited to reflect together and set priorities for social action in the Diocese, to be coordinated by Caritas Leeds.

The event began with Bishop Marcus leading a liturgy focused on the Beatitudes, which he likened to 'a Christian identity card'. The Bishop spoke about the roots of Caritas Leeds and restated the importance of Diocesan social action being coordinated and focused to maximise impact. After reflecting on Pope Francis' latest exhortation 'Gaudete et Exultate' (on the Call to Holiness in Today's World'), which reminds us that '*To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything that we do, wherever we find ourselves.*' (paragraph 14), participants listened to personal testimonies from witnesses with knowledge and experience of social injustices and challenges faced by parishes.

The participants worked together to devise a range of potential actions the Diocese might take to address these issues and voted for Caritas Leeds to coordinate action on **two priorities**: youth leadership and criminal justice. The agreed aim for the youth leadership priority is:

To develop a Caritas Leeds Diocesan Youth Leadership Team made up of young people

Since then, volunteers from Caritas Leeds have worked with the Diocesan Youth Service to develop an exciting plan for taking this forward, which is detailed below.

Gospel Inspiration

Mark 6:30-44 – Feeding the Five Thousand

The feeding of the five thousand serves as the inspiration for this proposal on youth leadership in the Diocese and a practical model we hope the young people involved will follow in their service.

The apostles, when confronted by practical difficulties and urgent needs, are challenged and supported by Jesus to respond through active leadership and participation in the miraculous transformations.

The **first transformation** is to the hearts of the apostles. They are no longer weary, cynical or passively waiting for Jesus to send away the crowd. They are transformed into leaders, capable of drawing on the abundant resources of their peers, working collectively and playing an active role in making change happen. Our hope is that by giving voice to young people and directly influence the work of the Diocese, the hearts of the young people who participate in *The Twelve* will be similarly transformed.

The **second transformation** is to the crowd, who enter as a frenzied, needy anonymous mass but, through the course of the miracle, turn into an organised community. With people sat together in smaller groups talking, listening and sharing, new relationships are given space to emerge. Our hope is that by giving them status within Diocesan structures, as well as practical training and formation, we can similarly equip *The Twelve* to reach out to young Catholics, identify future leaders and encourage them to play a more active role in their local parish.

The **third transformation** is to the modest offering of food which is gathered by the apostles and multiplied by Jesus to the point where, as Mark puts it, “all ate and all were filled”. Our hope is that *The Twelve* acts as a catalyst for a flourishing of youth leadership in many aspects of Diocesan affairs, leaving all enriched by the enthusiasm and creativity of young people.

How will it work?

Recruitment

- Diocese of Leeds Youth Service will work with parish youth group leaders and lay chaplains to identify 12 young Catholics to join the inaugural team.
- The young people selected will be Catholics aged 11-18, with some track record of commitment to service in their parish, school or another Catholic agency.
- Parental consent will be sought for all participants.
- Care will be taken to ensure as much diversity of location across the Diocese as possible

Formation

- The team will meet initially the Caritas Leeds, the Diocesan Youth Service and Leeds Citizens for team building, prayer and leadership training.
- *The Twelve* will be formally commissioned by the Bishop at an appropriate mass and/or large event in order to recognise their role and boost their profile locally.
- The Bishop will write to each participant's parents, Headteacher and parish priest to inform them of their appointment.
- The names of *The Twelve* will be listed on the Caritas Leeds section of Diocesan website

Key Roles

- **Collaborating with the Bishop in formulating a vision for the Diocese**
 - *The Twelve* will have a dedicated meeting with the Bishop at regular points throughout the year (e.g. quarterly) to discuss ideas, share the views of young people or gain deeper understanding of the work of the Diocese to aid effective consultation with young people.
- **Giving voice to young people in Diocesan decision making**
 - *The Twelve* will be provided with a structured programme for ongoing participation in Diocesan governance and decision making.
 - Ideas for this could include:
 - Shaping and reviewing the Diocesan Strategic Plan
 - Representatives on key Diocesan committees and/or forums
 - Meetings with key staff in different departments
 - Shaping and reviewing the Youth Service Strategic Plan
 - Presentations at Deanery meetings
 - Listening exercise with young Catholics in parishes and schools to identify key issues and develop proposals

- **Contributing towards key events and activities aimed at young people.**
 - Planning, promoting and participating in appropriate liturgical events.
 - Organising youth retreats and gatherings
 - Promoting Faith in Action Awards
 - Organising intergenerational actions

Rev. Dr. Joseph D Cortis

Coordinator of Caritas Leeds-March 2019