



Archdiocese of Dublin

Ard Deoise Átha Cliath

Education Secretariat

Post Primary Diocesan Blog – December 2025

Welcome & Introduction

A Chairde,

I am delighted to introduce myself in this Christmas edition as the newly appointed Post-Primary Diocesan Adviser for the Archdiocese of Dublin. My name is Tony Barry and having recently retired as Principal of St Kevin's Community College in Clondalkin, I am looking forward to supporting you in your vital work with young people across our schools.

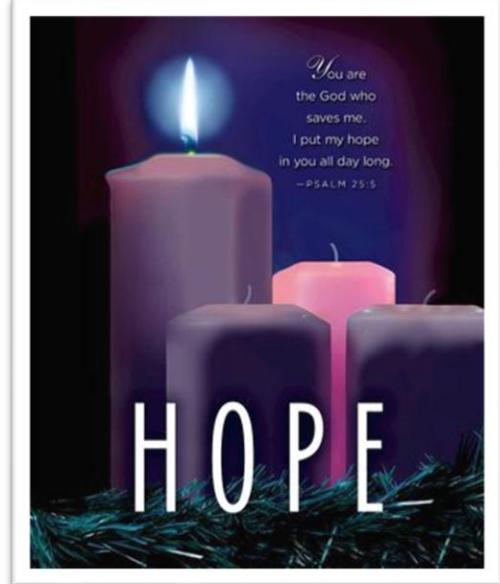
I am passionate about education, student voice, and fostering leadership among young people. Over the past few weeks, I have enjoyed beginning my role by training new Ember teams and connecting with schools involved in the John Paul II Awards and other initiatives. Planning is already underway for next year's Ember training and our annual reunion, and I hope to meet many of you in the new term.

In this Christmas blog, you will find a reflection on Advent, an update on our new Ember teams, news from the Archdiocese, including the historic designation of St Mary's Pro Cathedral as Dublin's Catholic Cathedral and short introductions to two inspiring new saints for our young people, Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati. Until then, I wish you, your school communities, and your families every blessing for a peaceful and hope-filled Christmas.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Tony Barry
(anthony.barry@dublindiocese.ie)

Opening Blessing



As we begin our Advent journey and light the first candle of the Advent wreath, may this sacred season invite us to pause, reflect, and rediscover the true meaning of Christmas and our own Christian calling.

As the candle of hope shines before us, may we be inspired by Mary, young, courageous, and open to God's plan. May her trust light our path as Advent unfolds.

May each of you, and the communities you serve, be blessed with the love, joy, and peace of this holy season, and be made ready to welcome the coming of the Lord.

“Mary sustains our journey toward Christmas, for she teaches us how to live this Advent Season in expectation of the Lord. For this time of Advent is a time of waiting for the Lord, who will visit us all on the feast, but also, each one, in our own hearts. The Lord is coming! Let us wait for him!”

~Pope Francis.

1. Advent: A Season of Preparation

Advent invites us to slow down, make space, and prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. In the busyness of school life, even a small moment of pause can be transformative. A few simple ideas you might consider:

Sacred Space: Create a small Advent corner in your classroom or office with a wreath, scripture, or quiet prompts for reflection.



(Marino Institute of Education: College Chapel Advent Wreath 2025)

One-Minute Stillness: Begin a class or assembly with a single minute of silence or gentle breathing.

Acts of Kindness: Encourage students to commit to one daily act of kindness: anonymous or shared.

A Short Advent Ritual: Lighting a candle, reading a single line of Scripture, or offering a simple prayer can ground a busy day.

Some useful resources:

Sacred Space: Your daily prayer online

Sacred Space is inspired by the spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and is a ministry of the Irish Jesuits. They offer retreats from time to time, particularly during the seasons of Lent and Advent. The Advent Retreat for this year, may be a helpful prayer resource and offer encouragement leading up to Christmas and the birth of our Saviour. This year, the Sacred Space Advent Retreat is based on the theme 'Christ Living Within.'

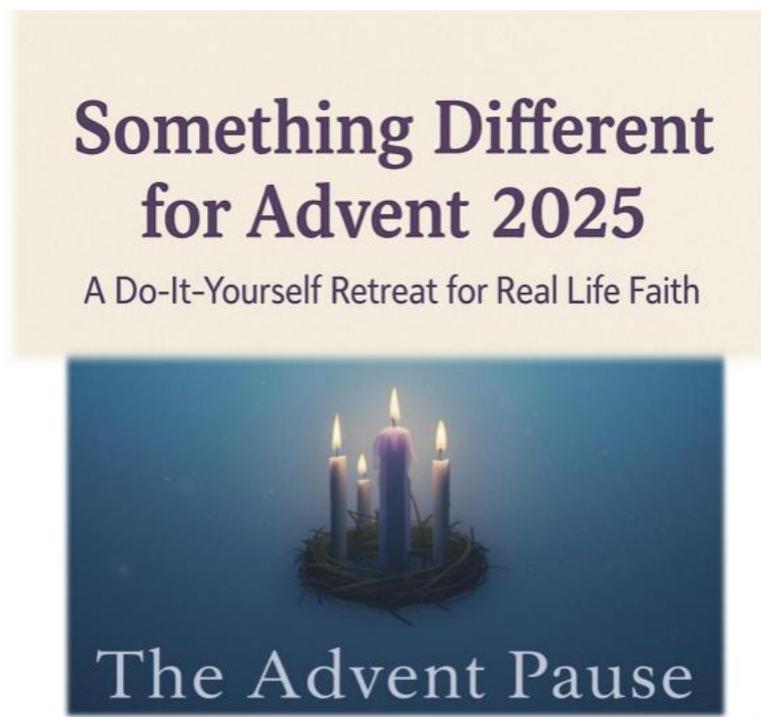


The Advent retreat will begin on the first Sunday of Advent (November 30th), and it ends on Christmas Eve (December 24th), offering an opening prayer, a daily scripture reading, a reflection, a reflection prayer, and a concluding prayer. Each day features a beautiful image that can be enjoyed while praying.

As we journey through these days of Advent – the darkest days of the year - we are invited to ask: **How can we move forward and help to bring Christ's light into the world?** God's gaze is always waiting for us, especially in this time of Advent. All we have to do is show up, and love can do the rest. St. Ignatius gazed upon the heaven and stars, and when doing so, felt within himself a powerful urge to serve God. **Do we give ourselves time just to pause and wonder and allow our light to shine? Join the retreat here:**

<https://4eu1g.r.a.d.sendibm1.com/mk/mr/sh/SMJz09SDriOHVCEtzmUdXCVw8FjG/BnWTj3Pp3DBz>

Something Different for Advent DIY Retreat 2025.



Something Different for Advent 2025

A Do-It-Yourself Retreat for Real Life Faith

The Advent Pause

#**SDFA2025**

<https://www.mountviewblaketownparish.ie/blog/?permalink=the-advent-pause>

"Lord Jesus, we give thanks for the young people entrusted to our care. As we journey through this Advent season, guide us with your wisdom and patience to be a true reflection of your light and love for them. Help us to see them through your eyes and to love them with your own concern. May we be a source of hope and joy as we walk with them in darkness and help them to find your promised light. Amen."

Advent is a journey of hope. Thank you for the ways you accompany young people on that journey.

The Advent Pause is a wonderful resource from St. Peregrine Parish Partnership. It is a free booklet; your personal, do-it-yourself retreat to help you find moments of peace, hope, joy, and love in the middle of your busy life. It also includes a free booklet as a resource for families, a 'Walking Advent with the Scriptures' Calendar and many other useful resources for you to download and print. Download all these resources at:

2. Ember Team Updates

This term we welcomed two new Ember teams, St. Michael's College, and St. Kevin's College, Clondalkin. Each team showed great enthusiasm for faith leadership and service in their school communities. Their energy is a reminder of what young people can achieve when empowered and supported.

Welcome St. Michael's Ember Team!



Welcome St. Kevin's Ember Team!



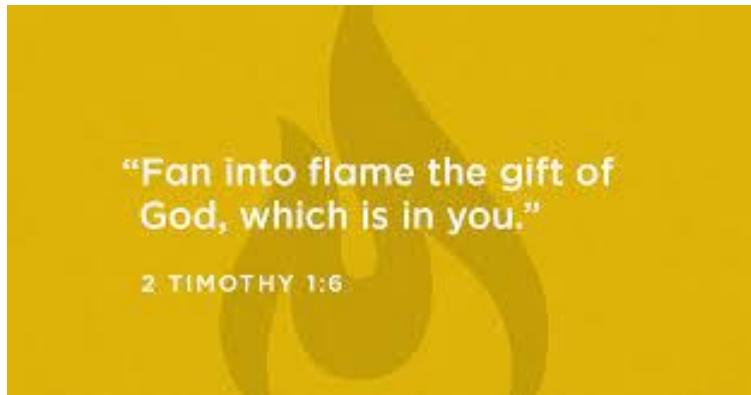
Looking ahead:

I look forward to commissioning the students from **Presentation College, Terenure** who will attend training and be commissioned as Ember Leaders on Thursday 4th of December.

Ember Team Training 2025: Planning has already started for next year's training in Ovoca Manor.

Ember Reunion: We will gather for our annual Ember reunion to share stories, learning, and encouragement on **Thursday 15th January in DCU** and this year we are delighted to welcome Bishop Paul Dempsey to lead our closing liturgy on the day.

Many thanks to the staff and chaplains who guide and mentor these young leaders. Your support makes this ministry possible. If you would like to find out more about Ember, please feel free to contact me.



3. News from the Dublin Archdiocese

Archbishop Farrell: Pope Leo designates St Mary's as Cathedral Church of Dublin

We are delighted to share the historic announcement of the designation of St Mary's Pro Cathedral as the Catholic Cathedral of Dublin by Pope Leo. This marks a significant moment in the life of our Archdiocese and offers a renewed opportunity to celebrate our shared mission as a faith community.



"My prayer is that this cathedral will continue to be a place that offers sanctuary – somewhere that fosters and shelters personal prayer and reflection, a place of encounter with the person of Jesus makes us who we are, and shapes what we do, how we live. Being at the service of this encounter is the heart of the mission of the Church. And a place of prayer is ultimately a place of peace. May this Cathedral be a place of peace for all who cross its threshold" – Archbishop Farrell

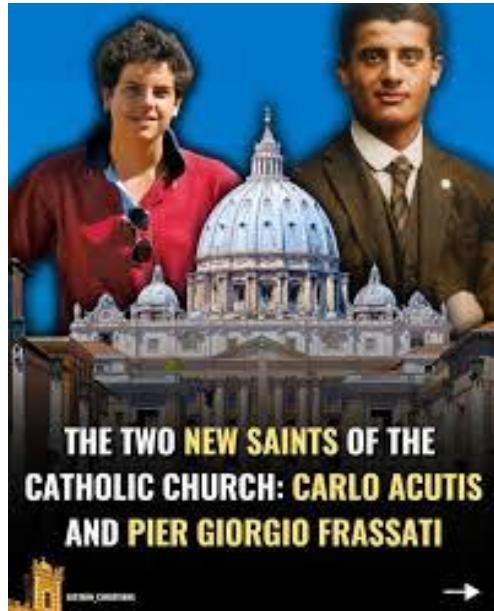
<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2025/11/14/archbishop-farrell-pope-leo-designates-st-marys-as-cathedral-church-of-dublin/>

More updates and resources will be shared with schools in the coming months as we prepare to mark this occasion together. For other Diocesan news and events see: <https://dublindiocese.ie/>

4. Two New Saints for Young People

On 7 September 2025, Pope Leo canonised two remarkable young Italians: **St Carlo Acutis** and **St Pier Giorgio Frassati**. Both offer powerful examples for our students. Pope Leo asserted that: “*Saints call us to look to God, make masterpieces of our lives.*”

Addressing over eighty thousand faithful filling Saint Peter’s Square for the canonization Mass of Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, Pope Leo XIV says the examples of these two young Saints invite all of us, especially young people, **‘to direct our lives upwards to God and make them masterpieces of holiness, service, and joy.’**



Pier Giorgio Frassati, a beacon for lay spirituality & Carlo Acutis, a witness of holiness in Making “masterpieces” of our lives.

Pope Leo underscored how both Saints Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis invite everyone,

“especially young people, not to squander our lives, but to direct them upwards and make them masterpieces.”

“They encourage us with their words: “Not I, but God,” as Carlo used to say. And Pier Giorgio: “If you have God at the centre of all your actions, then you will reach the end.”

This is the simple but winning formula of their holiness. It is also the type of witness we are called to follow, in order to enjoy life to the full and meet the Lord in the feast of heaven.”

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-09/pope-leo-saints-call-us-to-god-make-masterpieces-of-our-lives.html>

How Teachers & Chaplains Can Use the Example of the Two New Saints

St Carlo Acutis — “The Digital Disciple”

How to use his example in schools:

Digital Citizenship & Faith:

Invite students to reflect on how their online presence can be positive, respectful, and life-giving just as Carlo used his skills for good.

Creative Projects:

Encourage students to make short videos, posters, or digital “exhibitions” on values like kindness, fairness, gratitude, or Eucharistic devotion.

Wellbeing Link:

Carlo spoke about not letting technology “control” us. Use his words to start conversations on balance, healthy habits, and making mindful choices.

Role Model for Leadership:

Ember teams or student councils can explore how he used his gifts to serve others and consider how they might do the same in their own school.

St Pier Giorgio Frassati — “The Man of the Beatitudes”

How to use his example in schools:

Service Projects:

Link his life to SVP collections, food drives, or social action campaigns. Highlight that Pier Giorgio did simple, hidden acts of kindness every day.

Wellbeing & Friendship:

He had a strong group of friends and a deep sense of fun. Use this to discuss healthy friendships, peer support, and looking out for one another.

Outdoor & Retreat Activities:

Since he found God in creation, incorporate nature walks, outdoor reflections, or “prayer on the move” during retreats or RE classes.

Justice & Inclusion Themes:

Use his story to explore poverty, inequality, and standing up for others—even when it’s not popular.

Shared Activities Using Both Saints

“Faith in Action” Boards:

A display area showing quotes, pictures, and student responses to the examples of both saints.

Reflection Moments:

Use one short quote from each saint during announcements or assemblies throughout Advent or Lent.

Role Model Lessons:

Include them in RE units on modern saints, vocation, courage, or Christian leadership.

Peer Leadership Links:

Ideal for **Ember teams**, Meitheal groups, or Prefects to explore what servant leadership looks like for their generation.

Both saints speak directly to this generation. Their stories can spark conversations around service, integrity, joy, and purpose. I encourage you to try out some of the suggested activities and share their stories with the young people you accompany.

Christmas Blessing

As we approach Christmas, I want to thank you sincerely for your dedication, creativity, and pastoral care. Your work shapes the faith life, wellbeing, and growth of our young people in profound ways.

May this season bring peace to you, your school communities, and your families. I look forward to collaborating closely with you in the new year.

A Closing Blessing for Schools

May the light of Christ guide your steps,
the hope of Advent strengthen your hearts,
and the joy of Christmas fill your classrooms and corridors.

May your school be a place of welcome,
where every young person discovers their dignity,
their gifts, and their place in God's story.

May God bless the staff who teach, support, and accompany,
the chaplains who listen and lead,
and the students who bring energy, curiosity, and life to each day.

As we enter a new year,
may the Holy Spirit inspire all of us to walk together in faith,
in kindness, and in courage.

Every blessing for Christmas and the year ahead,
Tony Barry - Post-Primary Diocesan Adviser
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