

## what's youth 2000?

### **What's Youth 2000?**

#### **Just tell me what it is**

Youth 2000 is an independent, international initiative that helps youth & young adults aged 13-30 plug back into God at the heart of the Roman Catholic Church. Its main distinguishing feature is the emphasis it places on celebration of the Mass and **Adoration** of the Eucharist; next come a focus on active evangelisation and the organisation of retreats and spiritual events for young people throughout the world.

Youth 2000 works alongside both priests as well as religious communities within the Church and is open to any young adult who wants to take part – it's not 'members only' for the simple reason it has no members. The initiative is active in many parts of the world. In the UK, it's a registered charity and the National Office is based near Leeds.

Since 1991, Youth 2000 has helped thousands of young adults to 'come home' to the Church and to grow spiritually. This growth happens by experiencing the love of God, through prayer and also a sense of belonging, leading to a renewed faith in Christ and His Church. The best proof of its success are the many young people who are at the heart of the initiative, and who offer what they have received to others of their generation.

#### **How would you describe Youth 2000?**

The simple answer is that it's an initiative whose driving force is the Holy Spirit. But to be more specific, here are some of the main features that mark it out:

#### **Youth 2000 is focused on direct access to Jesus in the Eucharist**

Youth 2000 promotes a deep focus on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, creating a worldwide network of youth gathered around the Blessed Sacrament in prayer. This ability to have 'live' access to Jesus, through the Mass and Adoration, is at the heart of the Youth 2000 charism. Young people find the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist magnetic.

#### **Youth 2000 sticks to the Bible and the official teaching of the Church**

Youth 2000 encourages participants to dust off their bibles and get reading. At retreats, it also encourages people to keep closely to the official teachings of the Church, drawing on the Scriptures, the Catechism and on papal encyclicals – rather than offering them simply personal points of view. Equally, however, people are encouraged to think and to ask questions - discussion groups and reasoned explanations of the faith are both hallmarks of Youth 2000 events.

#### **Youth 2000 match-makes young people with Mary**

The Virgin Mary is Youth 2000's second favourite celebrity (after Jesus). Young people who

## **Just like a prayer**

Youth 2000's speciality is making time-honoured Catholic prayer and worship relevant to the modern day. In this article, you can get a snapshot of its particular form of spirituality.

### **It's all about the Adoration**

At the heart of Youth 2000 charism (a gift for building up the Church) is promoting a deep devotion to the Eucharist through the celebration of Mass, which then flows into Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is available all the time at a Youth 2000 retreat, except when Mass is celebrated once a day.

This practice of Adoration goes back to the twelfth century and was promoted by the Franciscans. It was formally organised in 1592 by Pope Clement VIII into the Forty Hours devotion, where Jesus was exposed (i.e. on display) continuously for forty hours - in honour of the time He spent in the tomb. Youth 2000 retreats are based on the Forty Hours devotion, with Jesus being exposed in the Blessed Sacrament for practically the entire time. This allows lots of time for both personal and group-based prayer in His presence, at times accompanied by contemporary music. It's a bit like any other relationship - it's great to talk on the phone, but sometimes what you really want is a good chat in person. That's where Adoration comes in.

### **Promotion of devotion**

Many traditional Catholic devotions also find a place within Youth 2000 spirituality. The Rosary is prayed each day throughout Youth 2000 retreats, and through it a special relationship with Mary is encouraged. Many involved in Youth 2000 have a special interest in the Divine Mercy devotion, with meditation on the Divine Mercy chaplet at 3pm and the distribution of Divine Mercy images being a regular feature at events. Youth 2000 also encourages proper use of the sacramentals (holy ceremonies and items), such as the Miraculous Medal of St Catherine Labouré, the Scapular of St Simon Stock as well as the use of blessed candles in worship.

### **Real celebrities**

Youth 2000 chooses to leave aside fame-hungry reality TV contestants in favour of the real celebrities, otherwise known as the Saints. Its international prayer festival takes place at the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, for whom Youth 2000 has a special devotion. Other patron saints - whom participants are encouraged to copy through talks and drama - include Our Lady of Guadalupe, St John Bosco, St Therèse of Lisieux, St Maximilian Kolbe, St Mary Magdalene, St Pio, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, The Forty Martyrs of England and Wales, St Joseph, St Faustina and St Michael the Archangel.

participate in its events and retreats soon pick up the rhythm of the Rosary and through praying about Mary's involvement in the life of Jesus, get to know her well – including those who never used to bother much with her. The reason for pointing people to Mary is so that she can whisk them straight to Christ.

### **Youth 2000 worships God in a way that's relevant to young adults**

Youth 2000 has a knack of bringing traditional forms of worship alive to young people in a way they can relate to. Its prayer festivals resound with live music, with a dedicated music ministry leading people in worship with contemporary Christian songs. Its style of worship is down-to-earth and highly participative – its services are not performances – everyone's involved. But it's also liturgically sound. There's no lying around on bean-bags wearing healing crystals or anything like that.

### **Youth 2000 encourages time out for spiritual things**

So often in the modern world we live life on a very fast treadmill. Youth 2000 helps young people step away from the 'buzz' of the world, slow down and spend some real time in prayer. It also encourages young people to rediscover the power of the sacrament of Reconciliation (or Confession) and the value of penance (in the form of prayer, fasting and almsgiving).

### **Youth 2000 energises the couch potatoes**

A useful way to think of Youth 2000 retreat is as a 'Hymn Gym', where young people get a spiritual work-out (but in a good way!). Often people turn up to events a bit spiritually adrift but find that they come back re-energised and enthusiastic for the faith. The retreats kick-start people's participation in parish life and encourage them to be more actively involved in the life of the Church, of Youth 2000 and in wider issues of social justice.

### **Youth 2000 spreads the word**

Youth 2000 takes seriously the call of the late Pope John Paul II to evangelise other young people. It encourages young people to devote a period of their life in the service of the Church, offering them training and study in schools of evangelisation to help them to do this. Young adults who have been touched by the work of the initiative actively witness to the love of God in their universities, schools, homes, on the streets, and places of work.

### **Youth 2000 is International**

Although it started in the UK, Youth 2000 is now a global phenomenon, with a presence in the USA, the Republic of Ireland, Germany, France, Russia and Australia.

(reprinted from Youth 2000 UK website <http://www.youth2000.org/index.asp> )