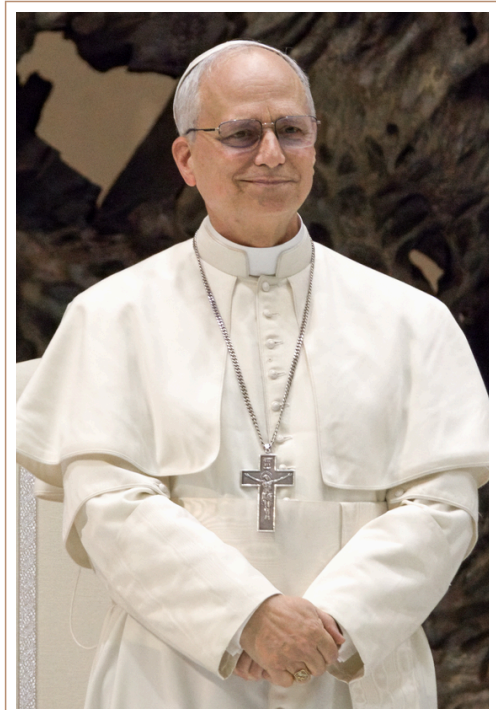




POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARD GUIDELINES



Diocese of Down and Connor





Prayer for Mission in the Diocese of Down and Connor

Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and open us to new ways of sharing the Gospel. Give each one of us a heart like the Heart of Jesus, with compassion, generosity and courage for all that is ahead. At this time of hope and renewal, guide conversations, inspire ideas, and let us all be attentive to your call to evangelise and to the new pathways that emerge.

Make us bold witnesses of your love who walk faithfully with Jesus as his intentional disciples. Unite us in mission, so that our parishes become places of welcome, encounter and renewal.

May this time of listening, learning and reflection bear lasting fruits within our Families of Parishes, our Diocese and beyond. Set within us a flame of faith, hope and love so that we can share in the work of the Holy Spirit, setting hearts on fire as we go forward with the joy of the Gospel to proclaim Christ to all we meet.

We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Young Disciples of Down and Connor: Lourdes, Leadership and Ministry



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1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Pope John Paul II Award was established to commemorate the late Pope Saint John Paul II, in recognition of his unwavering commitment to young people and his profound belief in their potential and importance within the life of the Church. The Award was officially launched by the Papal Nuncio to Ireland, His Excellency Most Rev Dr Giuseppe Lazzarotto, on 7th November 2006 in the Diocese of Derry, Ireland.
- 1.2** Since its inception, the Award has continued to flourish, inspired by the enduring legacy of Saint John Paul II's message of hope, joy and encouragement to the youth of the world. This legacy has been faithfully carried forward by his successors, including Pope Francis—whose pastoral care and emphasis on accompaniment have deeply resonated with young people—and, most recently, by Pope Leo XIV, who continues to affirm the vital role of youth in shaping the Church's future. Together, they echo the call of Saint John Paul II: "To young people I say: Do not be afraid! Accept the invitation of the Church and Christ the Lord!" (Pope Leo XIV, St. Peter's Square for the Regina Coeli on Sunday, May 11, 2025.)
- 1.3** It is a parish-based faith achievement award for young people between the ages of 16 and 18. It is designed to encourage young people to actively participate in the life of their church, community and society. It enables young people to become more aware of the teaching and role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ. It also serves to make young people and their gifts visible in their church, community and society.

The Award scheme provides a framework and context:

- To strengthen the relationship between parish, school, the young person and their family.
 - Create and offer sustainable opportunities for parish engagement and active youth engagement that continue beyond the award.
 - To recognise and celebrate young people's contributions while guiding them to reflect more deeply on the connection between faith and action.
- 1.4** By integrating faith development, strengthening parish connections, and fostering home-school-parish relationships, the Award offers the potential to inspire and shape lifelong intentional discipleship and community engagement.

2. Overview of the Pope John Paul II Award

2.1 The Award aims to help young people enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development through participation in parish, school, and community activities. It is non-competitive, flexible and voluntary, and requires an ongoing commitment by the participant. Awards are earned by taking part in parish and social awareness activities with three levels of Awards – Gold, Silver & Bronze. Participants who have completed the Gold Award have a further option of completing the Papal Cross Award.

- **The Bronze Award** is earned after completion of one (1) hour of parish activities and one (1) hour of social awareness activities each week over eight (8) weeks.
- **The Silver Award** is earned after completion of one (1) hour of parish activities and one (1) hour of social awareness activities each week over fourteen (14) weeks.
- **The Gold Award** is earned after completion of one (1) hour of parish activities and one hour of social awareness activities each week over twenty (20) weeks
- **The Papal Cross Award** is earned after completion of a further twenty-six weeks' (26) service of one (1) hour of parish activities and one (1) hour of social awareness activities (see below) after completion of the Gold Award, together with completion of a project or pilgrimage. The Papal Cross Award can also be awarded to young people in recognition of exceptional dedication and service to their parish outside of the formal Award requirements (see section [4.14]).
- **Award Top-Ups** are given in recognition of the extra activities that young people are already involved in. Top ups will go towards the total number of hours an individual has to complete. Top-Ups can be achieved in a number of ways.

Top-Ups:

Papal Cross	7.5 hours
Gold	6 hours
Silver	4.5 hours

2.2 Parish Activities

Parish activities involve serving within the liturgical life of the parish and active participation in liturgical or prayer-based activities. Examples of parish activities include (but are not limited to):

- Reading at Mass
- Altar Server
- Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion
- Member of choir/folk group
- Church decoration
- Collector
- Composing prayers of the faithful
- Preparing articles for the parish bulletin

2.3 Social Awareness Activities

Examples of social awareness activities include (but are not limited to):

- Engaging in social justice projects or initiatives
- Supporting a local foodbank
- Raise awareness about local or national poverty issues.
- Eco and Climate Justice (Laudato Si)
- Fundraising and awareness campaigns.
- Participation in St. Vincent de Paul
- Getting involved in Trócaire's global justice projects or social awareness programmes.
- Faith and Light
- Working in a youth club
- Regular visitation of residential homes
- Faith Friends
- Being part of a parish hospitality team

2.4 The Papal Cross Award project requires a further commitment of 10-20 hours upon completion of the 26 hours in the parish involvement and social awareness strands. Through the project the young person will demonstrate on-going commitment to faith and good works. Projects can be chosen from the following areas:

- **Pastoral** – such as the promotion of good choices within school or parish context.
- **Spiritual** – Helping to facilitate retreats, liturgies and services through school or the centre.
- **Peer Ministry** – Working with younger pupils in school or at parish level to deliver faith-based programmes such as GIFT.
- **Personal Skills Tasks** – Art, Computer, Public Speaking, Music, Drama. Examples could be designing activities and ideas for group work at retreats,

designing/making banners. Graphic design for a newsletter. Making a PowerPoint presentation or designing posters for Diocesan Events. Working with Diocesan Initiatives such as the youth choir or pilgrimages.

- 2.5** The participant will complete a personal profile about their project that may contain photos and examples of work and must include a 300-word summary.

Faith Development

- 2.6** The Pope John Paul II Award should also include a Faith Development component to give young people the opportunity to explore their beliefs and reflect on why they hold them. Faith development is not about having all the answers — it's about being open, curious and willing to grow.
- 2.7** It is important to recognise that not every young person who takes part in the Award will come from a strong faith background — some may have little or no experience of Church, prayer, or even the idea of faith itself. The Faith Development component of the Award offers young people a space to grow, ask questions, and explore faith in a way that feels accessible and meaningful to them. It offers an opportunity to build confidence, deepen understanding and form a personal connection with the faith at the heart of the Award, while encouraging an open heart to the person of Jesus Christ.
- 2.8** The faith development component could:
- be offered through a structured faith development programme. (Annex 3)
 - be delivered either as part of General RE classes in school or in the parish.
 - include an Annual Retreat Day for young people and their parents, featuring split sessions to allow both groups to explore their faith journeys separately.



2.9 Reflection & Commitment

The JPPII Award Reflective Journal is now available for young people participating on the Award to reflect on their experiences. **This reflection should take place within the parish and not be completed at school.** Creating a parish-based environment where young people can gather, share, reflect and pray is more meaningful and appropriate. This encourages young people who may not be familiar with parish life to engage with the programme in a genuine and meaningful way, offering them support and encouragement as they grow in faith, belonging and community within their parish family.



2.10 Personal Growth & Reflection

- Journaling helps young people reflect on their experiences in parish and community work.
- It encourages them to pause and think about why they're doing what they do.
- They become more self-aware and confident in expressing their thoughts and values.

Deepening Faith

- Writing about their spiritual journey, challenges and moments of grace strengthens their relationship with God.
- They begin to see how God is at work in everyday experiences, making their faith more real and personal.
- It becomes a form of prayer—a space to talk to God and listen back.

Tracking Progress Toward the Award

- Journaling provides a clear record of their service and participation.
- Makes it easier to write their final report or presentation by pulling from earlier reflections and insights.
- Helps them see how they've grown over time—spiritually, personally and as leaders.

Discovering Purpose

- Through journaling, they start connecting their actions to a deeper sense of purpose and vocation.
- It can help answer the question: "What kind of person is God calling me to be?"

Capturing Meaningful Moments

- Parish and community work can be full of small but powerful moments—journaling helps preserve those.
- Years from now, they can look back and remember what shaped their journey of faith.

2.11 Parish mentors (section 4) should provide reflection sessions to help connect acts of service with living out the message of the Gospel. The aim should be one session per term across the four academic terms. The PJPII Award Journal is a personal tool used throughout the award journey and includes the Final Reflections exercise. The Final Reflections are a required submission completed at the end of the award.

2.12 Record cards are included in the reflective journal. These enable the participant to formally record time spent on their chosen parish and social activities each week. The cards are regularly reviewed and countersigned by parish mentors or leaders. They provide a structured way to support young people—especially those not yet active in parish life—by guiding their involvement and allowing leaders to review and encourage their engagement.

2.13 A detailed breakdown of the Award requirements can be found under, “The Award Explained” tab at www.thepopejohnpauliiaward.com



3. Registration, Awards and Support

- 3.1** The Diocesan Award Office will support and guide your parish team through the PJPII Award process. It will also offer training and a contact person should you wish to avail of further support or guidance throughout the year.

Award Application

- 3.2** All applications for the Pope John Paul II Award must be submitted to the parish and a copy forwarded to the Diocesan Pathways to the Future Office. If an application is completed through the school, a copy must be retained by the school and another copy provided to the parish. Award applications are available through the website:
www.thepopejohnpauliaward.com

3.3 Award Medals and Certificates

The review of Record Cards and Final Reflections which are now included in the *PJPII Reflective Journal* will be coordinated centrally by the Pathways to the Future Office, rather than at parish level. An independent panel of reviewers will assess each submission to determine the appropriate award level.

- 3.4** To facilitate this process, a copy of each participant's *Reflective Journal* should **be sent no later than 31st October to:**

Pathways to the Future Office
120 Cliftonville Road
Belfast
BT14 6LA

- 3.5** Once Record cards and Reflective Journals have been reviewed, the Pathways to the Future Office will inform parish award leaders of the level of award each young person has achieved.

Diocesan commissioning Mass and new participants.

- 3.6** Each year, parishes should hold a commissioning service for new Award participants. On conclusion of the Award process, the Pathways to the Future Office will arrange an Award service for participants to receive their medals and certificates from the Bishop. Parishes can also arrange local Award ceremonies to celebrate participants' achievements with parishioners (see 4.11).

Cost

- 3.7** The cost for each participant is £20.00. This includes the cost of medals, certificates, a copy of the Faith for Life booklet for leaders and JPPII Award Reflective Journal. Once all registrations are complete for the new term, an invoice will be sent to the parish.

Training & Support

- 3.8** We are here to support JPPII Award leaders in any way we can. We will continue to review, evaluate and gauge any training or support required throughout the duration of the programme. For further information, please don't hesitate to contact the office.

E-Mail: pathwaystothefuture@downandconnor.org

Contact Number: 02890690920

Address: Pathways to the Future Office. 120 Cliftonville Road, Belfast BT14 6LA.



4. Establish a Parish Team

4.1 The Pope John Paul II Award is a parish-based programme. While a teacher, often the RE lead, may coordinate the Award within the school, it is essential that they work closely with a designated PJPII leader in the parish to ensure the programme is fundamentally parish based.

4.2 The **PJPII Parish Team** plays a crucial role in shaping this programme. It's responsibilities include:

- **Faith Formation** - Providing opportunities for the young people to learn about faith.
- **Mentorship** - Supporting young people in their faith journey, not just their service hours.
- **Parish Integration** - Ensuring each participant actively engages with parish life and their community.
- **Commitment Oversight** - Helping young people move beyond 'box-ticking' by engaging in meaningful service.
- **Home-School-Parish Connection** - Encouraging family involvement and collaboration with schools and clergy.
- **Recruitment and Promotion** - Actively promoting the programme in parishes, schools and youth centres to engage a broader audience.
- **Safeguarding** - Ensuring that appropriate safeguarding training has been completed so that all activity is in line with the Down and Connor safeguarding guidelines & policies.
- **Data Protection** - Ensuring that appropriate consent forms are signed and records stored within GDPR regulations.

4.3 Voluntary Roles within the Parish Team

An outline of the possible roles and responsibilities within the PJPII Parish Team are set out below. These roles can be merged and combined. Parish clergy may also wish to play an active role in the team, particularly in the area of faith development.

4.4 Parish Award Leader (Coordinator)

- Designs, plans and oversees the delivery of the programme within the parish.
- Acts as the main point of contact with the Diocesan Award Office (Pathways to the Future Office).
- Registers the team and Award programme with the Diocesan Award Office.

- Works closely with parish clergy and the school liaison person.
- Organises team meetings, tracks overall progress and ensures deadlines are met.
- Supports young people in choosing and managing their activities.

4.5 Award Liaison Person

- Connects the parish with local post-primary schools and youth clubs.
- Promotes the award in school and encourages student participation.
- Distributes application forms and helps organise school-based information sessions.
- Liaises with the designated teacher (usually the RE department) to support the delivery of the award.
- Organises youth events and pilgrimages.
- Utilises social media.
- Works with Award leaders to facilitate the young person's integration of faith and service.
- Encourages parish groups to support and welcome young people working toward the Award.

4.6 Faith Development Mentor

- Helps participants with the reflective components of the award, offering guidance and supporting young people's faith reflections.
- Offers tutorial sessions on ways to journal and guidance on completing final reflections. (This should be done at least once over each of the four terms in the academic year.)
- Leads or facilitates group faith development sessions or retreats with other team members.
- Collaborates with clergy to embed the award in parish life.

4.7 Parish Activities Coordinator

- Helps participants identify parish-based activities in which they can participate as part of their Award commitment.
- Acts as a liaison between participants and parish ministry leaders.
- Ensures opportunities are meaningful and appropriate for participants' development.

4.8 Social Awareness Support Person

- Assists young people in finding community service opportunities (e.g. volunteering, charity work).
- Builds partnerships with local organisations or charities.
- Ensures safeguarding practices are followed and that parents identify placements that are suitable.
- Ensures the appropriate application is completed. You can find this on the tab, *Award Resources – Safeguarding Information for Parents/Guardians*.
- This section also provides guidance to leaders and parents on completing the appropriate forms for external placements in the community. ****Please note that the parent/guardian is asked to take responsibility for the safety and well-being of the participant during activities that take place outside the scope of the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.****

4.9 Administration & Communication Support

- Keeps track of applications, parental consent and completed records in line with GDPR.
- Manages communication between team members, participants and their families.
- Supports event planning (e.g. information nights, celebration Masses, pilgrimages, etc).
- Ensures registration forms are completed and filed in line with GDPR requirements.
- Sends a copy of registrations forms and contact details of team members to the Pathways to the Future Office. A hard copy can be sent by post or emailed to: pathwaystothefuture@downandconnor.org



4.10 Role of parish clergy

The role of parish clergy in the Pope John Paul II Award programme is both supportive and pastoral, working with PJPII leaders helping to guide and affirm the young person in their faith journey. Specifically, their role can include:

4.11 Commissioning Mass or Liturgy

Each year, around the Feast of Christ the King, the Parish Priest or Deacon is encouraged to celebrate a Pope John Paul II Award Mass or Liturgy. During this Mass/Liturgy:

- New participants are commissioned and blessed as they begin their journey of faith and service.
- Young people who have completed the programme are recognised and presented with their Award in front of their parish community.

4.12 This combined celebration helps to welcome and encourage those starting out, while also honouring the dedication and commitment of those who have completed the Award. It places the whole journey —beginning and end—within the life of the Church and the parish family, reminding all involved that their faith is lived out in community and service.

Spiritual Support and Encouragement

4.13 Parish clergy can:

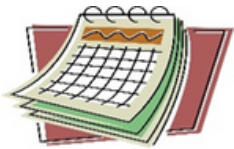
- Encourage young people to participate in the Award.
- Provide spiritual guidance and encouragement throughout the programme.
- Help the participant reflect on how their involvement in parish life can deepen their personal relationship with Christ and lead them to a fuller understanding of the meaning and mission of their Baptism.

Special Award Nominations

4.14 Parish clergy can also nominate a young person for an Award in recognition of their unique service and commitment to the Parish. If a young person has been actively involved in and committed to parish life for a number of years, they can be nominated for the Pope John Paul II Award, even if they have not participated in the formal programme, provided they are within the 16–20 age band. In these cases, parish clergy must provide a letter of recommendation to support their award, setting out the reason for the nomination.

5. Plan the Programme

- 5.1** To help you get started, we have included a timeline of roles and events which aligns to the school year. This will provide an outline of what parishes need to do to begin the rollout of the Pope John Paul II Award.



March

5.2 Invite Potential Members to the Parish PJPII Award Team:

- Proactively identify potential volunteers within the parish community—particularly young adults—who have the time, interest and skills to engage constructively with young people and support their faith development.
- Parish leaders, youth ministers and members of the Pope John Paul II Award team are encouraged to suggest names of possible volunteers. These names should then be discussed with the Parish Priest to discern together whether and how those individuals might be approached to join the team. This shared approach ensures thoughtful and inclusive outreach within the parish.

5.3 Come together as a Parish team to:

- Pray and reflect together as a group.
- Share a copy of the PJPII guidelines to provide an overview of the Award programme.
- Familiarise your team with the [Pope John Paul II Award | Achievement Award](#) website.
- Agree the vision, goals and desired outcomes for the award programme in the Parish.
- Outline the roles involved and the commitment required.

5.4 Allow time and space for reflection, giving potential team members an opportunity to:

- Discern whether they feel called to be involved.
- Consider how their unique qualities and skills could contribute to the team's success.



May to June

5.5 Setting up your parish team.

- Establish the PJP II Parish Team.
- Designate the team co-ordinator and specific roles to team members.
- ***Contact your safeguarding committee to identify vetting, training and safeguarding requirements for the parish team.***



June to August

5.6 Training and Support

- Attend any diocesan training sessions or meetings offered to support parish teams.
- Review safeguarding procedures and ensure all team members have completed required checks and training.
- Familiarise your team again with the JP II award website and Diocesan guide.

5.7 Develop a Parish Pope John Paul II Award Programme

The design of the Parish Award programme should provide regular opportunities for participants to meet and engage as a group, with a social element built in. This will allow friendships to develop and learning/experience to be shared. Ideally, the group should meet monthly during the academic year, September to June. The social element could comprise food at the start of a meeting, as well as occasional cinema or other activity-based evenings.

5.8 The agenda for the regular monthly meetings could comprise:

- Open with the lighting of a candle and prayer – possibly a short scripture passage and Lectio Divina.
- Participants share what they have been doing over the past month and what they have learned/gained from this, any challenges they have faced, and how they have overcome them.
- Catechesis/faith development – short video and discussion.
- Occasional guest speaker on various aspects of Catholic teaching or faith in action, eg, SVP, Chaplaincy at QUB or UU, Knights of Columbanus, Laudato Si, Trocaire, etc.
- Participants should be encouraged to consider and discuss relevant faith-based issues.
- Each month, participants could be pointed toward some recommended reading or relevant on-line resources.

5.9 The Parish should engage the participants as a group at key points through the Church year in services or other Parish activities – Advent, Lent, Easter, Pentecost – or to be trained in ministries such as Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion or Lector.

5.10 Participants should be invited to speak at Masses about their experience on the programme. This will help raise awareness of the programme, encourage others to participate, build communication skills and confidence, and also highlight the contribution that young people can make to the faith community and the development of their own faith.

5.11 The final stage of the programme (Easter to June) should focus on how the participants will apply what they have learned and how they will continue to play an active role in their parish community.

5.12 There should be support in place to encourage ongoing service – structured plans around the Papal Cross Award; volunteering opportunities that participants could be made aware of; participants encouraged to train as youth leaders for JPPII, GIFT, Children's Liturgy; etc.

5.13 The programme should also create space and opportunity for participants to play an active role in the key moments and events of the Church year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter.

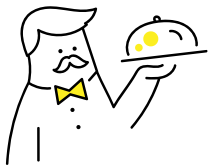
5.14 Develop a Timetable and Plan for Programme Launch and Delivery

The following are some key tasks to undertake in planning the launch and delivery of the programme in your parish:



Schedule key dates:

- Award launch date
- Information evening
- Commissioning service
- Meeting dates to bring participants together on a regular basis
- Retreat day
- Liturgy to mark programme close



- Book venues and catering.
- Select a faith development programme and source relevant resources.
- Develop meeting plan and prepare resources.



Plan a Parish Launch Strategy

- Set a proposed launch date for your parish's JPPI Award programme.
- Coordinate with the parish priest to promote the award at Masses or parish gatherings.
- Design promotional materials (bulletin notices, invitation letters, scripts for use at Masses, flyers, posters, social media content) tailored to your parish.
- Make use of your social media page.

6. Raise Awareness of the Award

6.1 It is important to help young people learn about the Pope John Paul II Award so they can get involved in their parish and local community. To do this, parish leaders can work with schools, colleges and youth clubs to spread the word about the Award. By giving short talks, using social media and sharing stories from past participants, young people can see the benefits of taking part. Working together, teachers, chaplains, youth workers and parish staff can help more young people get involved and make a real difference in both their church and everyday life. The ideas below show how to promote the Award in different places and encourage more young people to join.

6.2 In Schools, Colleges and Youth Clubs/Centres

- The PJPII Parish leaders should make contact with the schools, colleges and youth clubs/centres within the parish or parish family catchment area.
- Presentations during school assemblies are a great way to introduce the programme and its benefits. This should extend to students attending local integrated schools, colleges or youth clubs – bring the presentation and information to the catchment group.
- Reach out to youth workers, chaplains or teachers who can champion the award.
- It is particularly helpful to have a designated teacher or school chaplain as a key point of contact to encourage student participation in the life of their parish which can also be connected with the life of the school.
- Make use of social media and student testimonials and past participants to promote the programme.
- Organise Q&A sessions where past participants share their experiences. If the parish is launching the Award for the first time, the Diocesan Award Team can make connections with other parishes where it has been operating for some time who could offer past award recipients willing to share their experience.

6.3 In Parishes

- In parishes where the Award programme is already active, present awards and welcome the new Pope John Paul II Award participants at Mass.
- Encourage parish priests to speak about the award during Mass and parish gatherings.
- Invite past award recipients to share their journey and encourage new participants. If the parish is launching the Award for the first time, the Diocesan Award Team can make connections with other parishes where it has been operating for some time who could offer past award recipients willing to share their experience.
- Set up a visible sign-up area in the church or school (e.g., notice board or parish website).

6.4 Collaborative Approaches

- Strengthen communication between schools and parishes to create joint recruitment initiatives.
- Encourage youth ministers, teachers and clergy to work together in identifying and inviting potential participants.
- Offer incentives such as leadership roles (section [8.10-12]) in parish activities for participants who demonstrate a desire to engage in long-term commitment.



7. Parish Launch and Recruitment

7.1 A good launch will help get everyone excited and interested in the programme. Whether it's your first time running the Award or you're starting it again, it's important to plan things well. Sharing information at Mass, talking to young people and parents, and getting support from parish leaders can help make the launch a success. This way, more young people will understand what the Award is about and want to get involved.



End of September - early October

7.2 Launch the Award Programme in Your Parish

- Host a launch event or information evening for young people and their families.
- Provide an overview of the award levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Papal Cross), activities involved, and timelines.
- Share inspiring stories or testimonials from past participants if available. The Diocesan Award Team can make connections with other parishes who could offer past award recipients willing to share their experience.
- Invite representatives from various ministries and parish groups to attend to enable young people to explore where their gifts might be used and how they can get involved in the life of the parish community.
- Provide opportunities for questions and answers.

7.3 Introduce the parish PJPII Team

- Take a moment to introduce the Pope John Paul II Award Parish Team — a group of dedicated volunteers who will accompany and support the young people throughout their Award journey.
- Provide an overview of how each team member will help coordinate parish activities, provide faith formation, encourage social outreach, and ensure smooth communication and administration.
- Introduce the parish clergy and how they will endeavour to support and guide the young people. Their presence and encouragement are central to the Award programme.

- Introduce the mentors who will walk alongside the young people, offering encouragement, helping them reflect on their experiences, and deepening their understanding of faith in action.
- Together, the team will form a supportive network to help our young people grow in service, community and faith.

7.4 Registration of Participants

- Distribute and collect registration forms and the registration fee of £20.00.
- Ensure parental and participant consent on all necessary forms. All forms are available on the PJPII Award website.
- In registering for the programme, it should be made clear that participants are committing to attend all programme meetings, retreats, activities and events.



8. Deliver the Programme

This section outlines the importance of the Parish Award Team in effectively delivering the Award, strengthening links between home, school and parish, and encouraging long term engagement through a variety of parish leadership opportunities.

8.1 Guiding Participants through the programme

From the outset, it is important to

- explain the purpose and significance of the programme to participants and to stress that it extends beyond completion of the required service hours for the Award.
- ensure that young people commit to the faith development aspect.

8.2 Team members will support participants to set meaningful and realistic goals, helping participants to choose activities that align with their faith and interests. They should be encouraged to see service as a calling rather than simply a requirement of the programme, or a “tick box” exercise.

8.3 Parish mentors should accompany young people through the programme, not just monitor their progress and schools and parishes should collaborate in faith-based check-ins.

8.4 Reflection sessions should be structured and discussion based.

8.5 Celebration, Continuation and Life long Faith Commitment should be central to the programme and the Award. Presentation of awards and the commissioning of new participants should take place within the celebration of Sunday Mass or Liturgy. The young person should receive their medal and certificate in the presence of family, parish leaders, and peers. Public recognition adds value to their efforts.

8.6 The award should be a launchpad for further faith engagement, not an endpoint. Parishes should invite award recipients into long-term service roles (e.g., youth ministry, lector, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, faith-based outreach groups, chaplaincy teams, etc.) within the Parish or Family of Parishes. They can provide wonderful witness to other young people and to the wider faith community.

Strengthening the Home-School-Parish Relationship

8.7 Home Involvement

Encouraging family participation supports young people in their commitment, strengthens the connection between the family and parish, and can inspire families to become more actively involved in parish life themselves. To achieve this:

- Parents/guardians should be informed and engaged from the very beginning and should be invited to be involved in the information/launch evening.
- Materials and resources should be provided to support faith-based discussions at home, ensuring that opportunities for faith formation extend beyond the parish and school.
- A retreat day or an evening of reflection for both parents and the young people offers a structured way for parents to reflect on their role in supporting their child's faith where both share a sense of journey together. A retreat day should be factored into the programme plan and timetable.
- Think about volunteer roles that you could invite parents/guardians to consider.

8.8 Parish Engagement

Young people should be encouraged to take the lead in choosing parish and social activities that reflect their own interests, skills and talents. This allows them to engage in a way that is meaningful and personally fulfilling. There should **be at least five** parish activities available to choose from. Clergy and Mentors should actively accompany young people in their service, building long-term parish and community connections beyond the award. Young people should be encouraged by their parish to take up leadership opportunities which continue beyond the award.

- 8.9** After completing the Pope John Paul II Award, young people often feel more confident, responsible, and connected to their parish and community. This makes it a great time to invite them into leadership roles that allow them to continue growing and contributing. Here are some examples of leadership roles they could take up (this list is not exhaustive):

8.10 Parish-Based Leadership Roles:

Youth Ministry Leader or Helper

- Help organise or lead youth groups, retreats or social events.
- Support younger peers who are just starting the Award.

Liturgy Leader

- Assist in planning or leading prayer services or youth-led liturgies.
- Become a lector, altar server coordinator, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

Parish Pastoral Council Youth Representative

- Offer a youth perspective in parish planning and decision-making.

Confirmation Programme Mentor

- Support or mentor candidates preparing for Confirmation.

Choir or Music Ministry Leader

- Lead or coordinate music at youth Masses or other parish events.

Volunteer Coordinator or Project Leader

- Organise service activities such as parish clean-ups or charity events.

8.11 School or College-Based Leadership Roles:

Faith Prefect or Chaplaincy Team Member

- Support school liturgies, charity events and pastoral activities.

Peer Mentor or Ambassador

- Represent the Award programme and encourage other students to join.

Student Council Member

- Advocate for faith-based or community-building initiatives in school.

8.12 Community or Diocesan Roles:

Diocesan Youth Ambassador

- Represent the Award and the diocese at youth events or gatherings.

Retreat or Pilgrimage Leader

- Help plan or lead diocesan pilgrimages (e.g., to Lourdes, WYD).

Public Speaker or Testimonial Giver

- Share your experience at Award launches or diocesan events to inspire others.



“It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be grounded down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.”

*15th World Youth Day
Address of Pope St John Paul II, Vigil of Prayer
Tor Vergata, Saturday, 19 August 2000*

RESOURCES SECTION

Dear young people, parents, parishioners and all members of our Diocesan family,

Our young people are the future of the Church and of society. They have been blessed with gifts of the Holy Spirit and the graces of God to enrich the lives of the people they meet and the faith communities to which they belong. It is with great joy and hope, therefore, that I invite them to play an active role in the service of their parishes and as People of God through their participation in the Pope John Paul II Award.

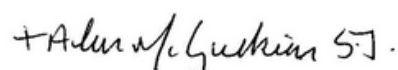
The Award is a celebration of the faith, commitment and gifts of our young people. This award recognises not only the generous contributions they make to their parishes and communities but also honours their active and vibrant presence at the very heart of the Church's mission of renewal and evangelisation.

As a Diocese, we are committed to a plan of mission and renewal that places faith formation, youth engagement and leadership development at its core. This Award plays an important role in that vision, helping to form young people who are grounded in faith, open to the Holy Spirit and ready to respond to the call of the Gospel in today's world.

Our young people are not just the future of the Church — they are its present. Through their service, leadership and witness, they breathe new life into our parishes, schools, youth centres and local organisations. The Award supports and encourages them on their journey of faith, helping them to deepen their relationship with Christ and to live the Gospel in action - serving others, growing in discipleship and discovering the unique call God has placed on their lives.

The Pope John Paul II Award also helps to build important bridges between the young person and their family, school, parish and community. It provides a dynamic framework to encourage and inspire young people to see themselves as vital members of a wider family of faith, called to mission by virtue of their baptism.

In the spirit of Saint Pope John Paul II, who had a profound trust in the potential and holiness of youth, we affirm their capacity to lead with courage, to serve with love and to live the Gospel with authenticity and joy. We give thanks for the energy, enthusiasm and faith of our young people. May this Award continue to inspire, uplift and challenge a new generation to answer God's call with confidence and hope. May each young person come to know that their faith, lived fully and courageously, is a light for the world and a great gift to the Church.



✠ Alan Mc Guckian SJ Bishop of Down and Connor
September 2025

Introduction

Good [morning/afternoon/evening] everyone,

Today, I would like to speak to you about an exciting opportunity for the young people in our parish – the Pope John Paul II Award. This programme is a valuable way for young people to grow in their faith, serve their parish and community, and deepen their relationship with God. For many young people, faith can sometimes feel distant, something practiced only in church on Sundays. The Pope John Paul II Award can inspire young people to an active faith, a lived experience — one that reaches into their daily lives, their communities and their personal relationships with Christ.

The award is named after Saint Pope John Paul II because he was a powerful advocate for young people and a passionate believer in their potential to change the world through their faith. Throughout his papacy, he continually called young people to greatness - not just in terms of success, but in holiness, courage and service. He reminded them that they are not just the future of the Church but the present, and that their faith, energy and gifts are essential to the life of the Church today.

He also founded World Youth Day, travelled the globe to meet with young Catholics, and spoke often about the purpose of discovering their vocation and living it boldly.

He also recognised the challenges and the fact that in today's world, young people are searching for meaning, for purpose, for something that will help them navigate life's challenges. This award offers them just that. It encourages them to:

- Take ownership of their faith journey.
- Serve in their parish and local community in a meaningful way.
- Grow spiritually through faith formation and reflection.
- Build lasting relationships within the parish beyond the award itself.

But this is not just about young people — it is about us as a parish. It is an invitation for all of us to support, encourage and walk alongside these young on their journey of faith.

How Can Young People Get Involved?

- Young people age 16-18 can take part by committing to:
- Faith Development: Learning about the truths of their faith and how it connects with the world around them.
- Parish Involvement: Becoming involved in ministries within the parish and wider parish family.

- Social Awareness: Engaging in charitable and community service, helping those in need.
- Reflection: Regularly reflecting on their experiences, deepening their understanding of faith in action.

The programme lasts 16 months, with key moments of reflection, mentorship and an Annual Retreat Day for young people and their parents. This retreat is designed to support and encourage faith to be lived out in the home in a way that connects to daily life. It is also an invitation for young people to put out into the deep, to step forward in faith and to discover all that God has given to them. It is more than just volunteering - it is about young people learning who they are in Christ and how He is calling them to use their talents.

The Pope John Paul II Award can also be a stepping stone towards deeper faith and leadership in the Church. It aligns with the Diocese's vision of renewal and mission for the Church, ensuring that young people are not just present today but are prepared to lead tomorrow.

By participating, young people are being formed in faith and service, gaining skills and confidence that will allow them to respond to God's call, whether that be through leadership in their parish, involvement in ministry, or a deeper commitment to their faith in their careers and family life.

Pope John Paul II once said: **“Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ.”** This award is an invitation for our young people to do just that—to open their hearts to Christ and allow Him to shape their lives. So today, I would like you to consider:

- If you are a young person aged 16-18: Consider signing up and participating on a journey with other peers that will help you develop your skills, grow in confidence, discover your unique gifts and qualities, and realise your full potential as you prepare for adult life.
- If you are a parent: Encourage your son or daughter to take part. Walk with them in their faith journey.
- If you are a parishioner: Help us support these young people—be a mentor, a prayerful presence, or simply offer words of encouragement.

When young people serve, our entire parish benefits. Their energy, creativity, and enthusiasm bring new life into our parish communities. Let us encourage and support them as they take this step.

If you would like more information, please come and speak to me or one of our parish leaders after Mass. Let's work together to nurture the faith of our young people and strengthen the future of our parish.

Thank you for listening,

God Bless

 Alpha Youth

 alpha.org.uk/youth

Alpha Youth is a series of group conversations that freely explore the basics of the Christian faith in an open, friendly environment.

 Sycamore

 www.sycamore.fm

Sycamore is an informal course about the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. Each session includes a short film and time for discussion, offering space to meet others, share ideas, explore beliefs and reflect on life's big questions.

 CEPHAS – Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service

A faith formation programme for post-16 students in Catholic schools across Down and Connor. The Cephass programme is approved by Bishop Alan McGuckian SJ. It is exciting, challenging, dynamic and rewarding—providing students with the opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with God and guiding students to appreciate the message of Christ, the Church's key beliefs, Catholic Social Teaching and how it relates to personal life, society and the world. ***Please Note*** - This programme is available to Post 16 students in the Diocese of Down and Connor. Training on the rationale and methodology associated with the programme is provided by the Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Services. Those who wish to find out more about the Cephass Faith Formation Programme can contact the Down and Connor Schools' Support Service using the email contact below.

 Email: dctrusteeservice@downandconnor.org

 Altaration: The Mystery of the Mass Unveiled

 ascensionpress.com

Altaration helps teens appreciate the beauty and mystery of the Mass. It addresses one of the biggest challenges in youth ministry: engaging young people to look forward to attending and participating in the Eucharist.

 How Does Jesus Want Me to Live My Life?

 thepopejohnpauliiaward.com

This RE class resource from the Pope John Paul II Award helps young people explore how to live out their faith in daily life. It promotes personal reflection, service to others and active engagement in Church life, inspired by the teachings of Jesus.

 Faith for Life – Redemptorist Communications

A reflective resource exploring frequently asked questions, debated topics and doubts about the Catholic faith. It invites honest conversation about the beliefs we hold and share.

 Email: sales@redcoms.org

 redcoms.org

Trócaire – The Right Focus Project

 www.trocaire.org

The Right Focus is Trócaire's documentary filmmaking programme that explores global justice issues through short films. It is designed for young people in post-primary schools and youth groups across Ireland who are passionate about justice, creative storytelling and making a real difference in the world.

Trócaire GLAS ÓG – A Climate Justice Resource

 Available at: thepopejohnpauliaward.com

GLAS ÓG invites young people to reconnect with the sacredness of Earth as part of God's creation. From this foundation, it explores climate justice issues from a faith perspective—looking at the causes and effects of climate change, and encouraging a response rooted in Catholic social teaching.

Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home

 www.vatican.va

Laudato Si' is an encyclical letter written by Pope Francis in 2015. It calls attention to the urgent need to care for the environment and for the most vulnerable. Rooted in Catholic social teaching, it encourages ecological awareness, spiritual reflection, and action on issues of global and environmental justice.

Missio – The Pope's Charity for World Mission

 missio.org.uk/catholic-social-teaching

Missio provides engaging Advent, Lent, and Social Justice resources for both primary and post-primary pupils. These materials help educators support and encourage students to explore the world and their role within it, deepening their understanding of the mission of the Universal Church. Through the lens of the Gospel, they grow in faith, think critically and become more aware of global issues.

Prayer for Discernment for Prospective Parish Team Members

Loving God,
You know my heart and the gifts You've given me.
As I consider this invitation to join the Pope John Paul II Award team, help me to
listen deeply to Your voice.
Am I being called to serve young people at this time?
Are my skills, qualities, and faith meant for this role?
Give me clarity, peace, and courage — to say yes if You are calling me, or to step
back if now is not the time.
Guide me, Holy Spirit.
Help me to trust in Your plan and serve where I'm needed most.
Amen.

Prayer for Meeting to Establish Parish Team

Loving and Faithful God,
You have called us together as one team, each with different gifts, united in one
purpose: to walk with young people as they grow in faith, serve with love, and
seek Your face.
Help us to work in harmony, as one body in Christ — listening to one another,
supporting one another, and always keeping You at the heart of all we do.
May our service be rooted in prayer, our actions guided by Your Spirit, and our
hearts open to the needs of those we are called to accompany. Bless the young
people who will take part in the Award.
May our encouragement help them come to know You more deeply, ignite a
lasting love for You, and awaken within them a desire to live out their faith with
courage and joy.
Unite us, Lord, in this mission. Keep us faithful, humble, and hopeful, as we
plant seeds that You alone can grow.
We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Prayer for the Launch of the Award

Loving God,

As we prepare to launch the Pope John Paul II Award, we pray for the young people of our parish and community.

Open their hearts to hear Your call, to grow in faith and to take their place in the life of the Church.

Bless those who will speak and promote the Award.

May they share with confidence, joy, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, so that something is awakened in the hearts of the young.

We pray for unity among our schools, parishes and youth groups.

May we work together with generosity and purpose, trusting that You are at work in all we do.

May this Award be a doorway to encounter You, to serve with love and to discover the joy of discipleship.

Prayer for the Opening Meeting of the PJPII Award Programme

Loving God,

we gather tonight with open hearts and hopeful spirits.

Bless the young people who are beginning this journey — may they be inspired by what they hear, and open to the ways You are calling them to grow in faith and service. Bless their families, who support them with love and encouragement.

Bless the team who have prepared this evening — may their words and witness speak of Your joy and goodness.

As we listen to stories and share this moment as a community, may Your Spirit guide us, unite us, and set our hearts on fire for You.

Amen.

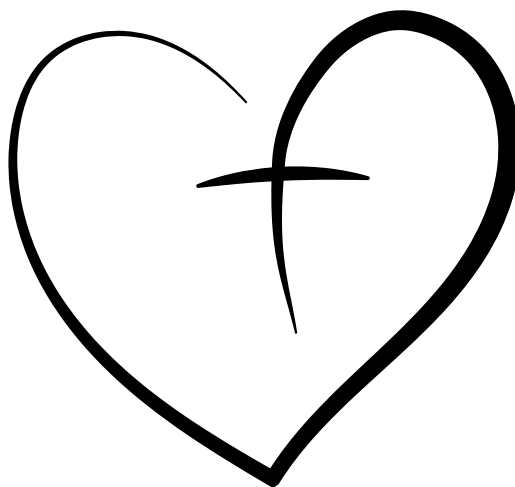


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His Holiness, Saint John Paul II (Front Cover)

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His Holiness, Pope Leo XVI (Front Cover)

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His Holiness, the late Pope Francis (Front Cover)

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Pope John Paul II Award Participants (Front Cover)

- Receiving medals and certificates at St Colmcille's Parish, Ballyhackamore, Belfast (2025).

Way of the Cross – Lent Dramatisation (Front Cover)

- Performed by Award participants Lucy Hillen, Erin Moag, Liam Leneghan & Patrick King at the Parish of Maghera, Newcastle, Co. Down.

Lourdes Pilgrimage 2025 (Front Cover)

- Fr James O'Reilly, Parish Priest of Antrim, leading young people on pilgrimage to Lourdes from the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Page 3

Anne Marie (Lower Sixth, Dominican College) with Emmanuel at St Theresa's Parish, Glen Road, Belfast. Both are participants of the Pope John Paul II Award.

Pages 8 & 10

Reflection sessions led by Award Leader Dominic O'Reilly with Pope John Paul II Award participants, Parish of Maghera, Newcastle, Co. Down.

Pages 12 & 24

Pope John Paul II Award participants, Niamh, Sarah, Edward, Yeliseys, Caoimhe and Gavin with Parish Priest Fr Michael McGinnity and Award leader, Catherine Diamond, at All Saints Parish, Ballymena.

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Adam (Minister of the Word) with Parish Priest Fr Gabriel Lyons and his brother Amos, St Theresa's Parish, Belfast.

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Pope John Paul II Award Leaders:

Fr Jim Crudden PP, Dominic O'Reilly, Brenda Webb, Conor McPolin, Clare Cunningham, Peter Gribben, Parish of Maghera, Newcastle, Co. Down.

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This guide was developed by the Pathways to the Future Office



www.pathwaystothefuture@downandconnor.org



Diocese of Down and Connor

www.downandconnor.org

September 2025