



Fr John Jesus pictured

FAITH MEETS ACADEMIA: ST ANTONY'S PRIEST INSPIRES YOUNG MINDS AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

BRIDGING THE WORLDS OF SPIRITUAL FAITH AND ACADEMIC PURSUIT



Fr John Jesus, centre middle

In a remarkable endeavour to merge spiritual enlightenment with academic aspiration, Fr John Owen Moloney, also known as Father John Jesus, from St Antony's Church led a First Holy Communion group on an enriching visit to Oxford University. Fr John Jesus, originally from Ireland, is a brother of the Community of St John. The brothers have a priory in Forest Gate, near Stratford in east London, where they serve the parish of St Antony's, and where Fr John has been parish priest for 12 years. The trip, attended by 28 people including Fr John, Ms Olivea, and the parents of the children, aimed to inspire the young minds to achieve academic excellence while deepening their spiritual understanding.

The visit was a unique initiative designed to show the children that with dedication and hard work, they too could aspire to join the ranks of Oxford's illustrious alumni. At the same time, it provided an opportunity for Fr John to connect with the university's chapel, fostering a dialogue between the realms of faith and academia.

Arriving at Oxford University on a crisp winter morning, the group was greeted by the picturesque architecture and historic ambience of one of the world's most prestigious institutions. The excitement was palpable as the children, dressed in their finest attire for this significant occasion, were eager to explore and learn. Ms Olivea, who played a crucial role in organising the trip, emphasised the importance of this visit.

"FAITH AND ACADEMICS CAN WALK HAND IN HAND"

"We want the children to see that their spiritual journey and their academic aspirations are not mutually exclusive but can complement each other beautifully," she remarked. The highlight of the visit was a tour of Oxford's renowned chapel, a masterpiece of architectural and spiritual significance.

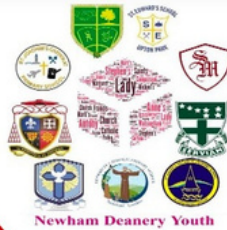
Known for his charismatic and often comedic homilies during Mass, Fr John was invited to give an enlightening talk about the rich tapestry of images, the intricate architecture, and the profound messages embedded within the chapel's walls.

At 12:30 PM, the group, including the First Holy Communion children, their parents, and a few Oxford University lecturers, gathered in the chapel, which was bathed in the soft glow of stained glass windows. Fr John began his session with a warm welcome, expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to speak at such a revered institution.

Meticulously, he explained the symbolism of the chapel's numerous images, each telling a story of faith, hope, and perseverance. He delved into the history of the chapel's architecture speaking about the saints depicted in the stained glass, the intricate carvings, and the altar's significance. His ability to weave historical context with spiritual insights captivated the audience. One of the most poignant moments was when he discussed the role of priests throughout history, emphasising their dedication to guiding and nurturing faith within the community.

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ooliveaohonmele@brcdt.org



Fr John Jesus top centre, far left

As he concluded his talk, the audience rose to their feet in a spontaneous standing ovation. The children, wide-eyed with awe, clapped enthusiastically, their faces reflecting the impact of the session.

The parents and lecturers were equally impressed, moved by the depth of his insights and his ability to connect with both young and mature minds. In recognition of his inspiring talk, Fr John was extended an invitation to return to Oxford University. The visit to Oxford was more than just an educational trip; it was a profound experience that bridged the worlds of spiritual faith and academic pursuit. His message was clear: with faith and dedication, there are no limits to what one can achieve.

The day concluded with a group photograph in front of the chapel, capturing the smiles and joy of the children, their parents, and the educators. The memories of this day, filled with inspiration and learning, would undoubtedly stay with them for years to come. Reflecting on the visit, Ms Olivea noted, "This trip has been an eye-opener for the children. They have not only seen the grandeur of Oxford University but also learned that their faith and academics can walk hand in hand. It's a lesson they will carry forward in-

-their lives."

Humbled by the overwhelming response, Fr John expressed his hope for the future. The visit to Oxford University was a testament to the power of combining spiritual guidance with academic ambition, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended. It was a day of enlightenment, inspiration, and the realisation that with faith and hard work, the possibilities are indeed endless. As the group bid farewell to Oxford, their hearts brimmed with gratitude for the profound experience they had shared.

For Fr John Jesus, known for his unwavering dedication and compassionate leadership at St Antony's Church, this trip was more than just a visit; it was an embodiment of his commitment to nurturing the spiritual and intellectual growth of his community. Throughout the excursion, Fr John's infectious enthusiasm and genuine care for the children and their families shone brightly. His ability to seamlessly weave together spiritual wisdom with academic insights left an indelible mark on all those present.

For the children, this trip was a transformative journey, igniting within them a newfound sense of purpose and possibility. For the parents, witnessing their children's eyes light up with inspiration and wonder was a testament to the profound impact of Fr John's guidance.

As they journeyed back to St Antony's Church, the memories of their day at Oxford University lingered, serving as a beacon of hope and aspiration for the future. Fr John Jesus, with his charismatic presence and unwavering faith, had not only led them on a physical journey but had also opened the doors to a world of endless possibilities. In the hearts of the children and parents alike, his influence would continue to resonate, guiding them on their respective paths of spiritual and academic growth.

'Heavenly Father,

As Fr John Jesus begins his sabbatical, we pray for his rest, peace, rejuvenation and a speedy return. Give him strength, and guide him spiritually throughout. We entrust Fr John into Your loving care, knowing that you will sustain him and bless him abundantly during his time apart.

In Your Holy Name, we pray.

Amen'



Parents and students in attendance



Fr John Jesus, centre top middle