

Pupils' farewell to C of E schools

IT was a poignant time for these 11-year-olds as they said goodbye to their C of E primary schools.

Hundreds of pupils from church schools around our diocese came to Portsmouth Cathedral to mark their transition to secondary school.

The cathedral repeated its Leavers' Service on three successive afternoons to cater for all the schools wanting to take part. Each was preceded by a series of workshops, all on the theme of journeys.

Children were able to learn songs which they then performed during the service, make origami boats, pray for people around the world and try on the outfits of a bishop and verger.

And the service itself included songs, readings, prayers and a talk. Bishop Christopher helped to lead one of the three services, with the Bishop of Southampton, the Rt Rev Jonathan Frost, and assistant bishop the Rt Rev Ian Brackley helping to lead the other two.

At the Tuesday service, the Archdeacon of Portsdown, the Ven Joanne Grenfell, used a rucksack, map, compass and mobile phone to draw a parallel



Above: the Ven Joanne Grenfell preaches; left: Canon Peter Leonard leads a workshop

with the journey the 11-year-olds would be making to secondary school.

Laura Bosworth, headteacher of Oakfield C of E Primary in Ryde, read one of the readings, while pupils

from St John's C of E Primary School in Rowlands Castle led the prayers.

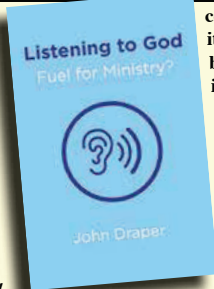
Pupils were able to parade into and out of the cathedral with their school banners at each of the services. Representatives

from each school were also given a candle emblazoned with the diocesan crest to take back to their school.

The three Leavers Services attracted almost 900 pupils from 23 different schools in total. Almost 500 of those children also participated in the morning workshops. Our education team organised similar events in Winchester Cathedral and Romsey Abbey for C of E schools from Winchester diocese.

REVIEW

Listening to God: fuel for ministry?
by Canon John Draper



JOHN Draper has written a book that brings together the typically monastic practice of *lectio divina* and the life of a parish priest and worshipping community.

Just another book on prayer? What is distinctive about John Draper's approach is that he anchors prayer in the life of the community. It is not an individual lifestyle choice that we can take or leave, but 'fuel for ministry', as the title says.

Lectio divina or holy reading is a way of engaging with Scripture in four stages: reading, meditation, prayer,

contemplation. Draper sets it in its historical, monastic context, but also stresses that its purpose is conversion of life (one of the Benedictine vows).

He notes that many of the newer forms of Christian living, whether Fresh Expressions or 'new monasticism', place a high value on contemplative silence and the ruminative encounter with Scripture found in *lectio divina* and also in saying the psalms in daily prayer.

These are communal ways of expressing the personal practice of silent meditation and thereby receiving the scriptural text, 'listening' to it, at a deep level of the heart.

Draper argues that silence and listening to the word of God are essential for ministers of religion, both clergy and Readers, in order not to be overwhelmed by the busyness of their lives. Deep listening and attentiveness

is essential to pastoral care, and is fostered through *lectio divina*. So, he concludes, the disciplined life of prayer and lectio which characterises monastic living can be transplanted to the parish community too.

This short and well-researched introduction could with profit be read alongside the bestselling 'Contemplative Minister' by Ian Cowley.

My only niggle is that it would have helped to spell out clearly the distinction between meditative silent prayer, when you are thinking, and contemplative silent prayer, when you lay thoughts aside and simply wait on God.

Otherwise, the book is an important reminder that God calls us to 'be still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46), and that this is what resources us for our active discipleship.

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