

Insecurity replaced by identity in Christ

Ruby Fitzgerald-Keen could hardly look at herself in a mirror because she worried about her appearance. Then she found faith

UNIVERSITY student Ruby Fitzgerald-Keen had struggled with insecurity growing up – at times, she could hardly look at herself in the mirror.

She had worn a full face of make-up for years, using it as a shield to protect herself from what others thought. But her life was transformed once she realised that she was accepted and loved by God.

It was the day before she was baptised at Holy Rood Church, Stubbington, when this powerful moment happened. It meant that when she was symbolically plunged under the water, it really felt as though the ‘old self’ had disappeared.

“I went from being someone who couldn’t even look at herself in the mirror to someone who genuinely loves who she is and who she’s becoming,” said Ruby.

“Today I can look at myself with nothing but love, because I’ve come to understand this truth: my identity is found in Christ – and Christ alone.”

Ruby had grown up in Portsmouth, Fareham and then Botley, with parents who hadn’t really discussed faith. But she did explore something about faith at secondary school. She had switched to a new school



Ruby Fitzgerald-Keen realised that she was genuinely loved and valued once she joined a church community and understood more about God

in Year 9 and met Jess, who happened to be a Christian. She’s now Ruby’s best friend.

So when Ruby reached a low ebb two years ago, it was Jess who suggested that they go to her church – Holy Rood – on Easter Sunday.

“I was in a really dark place in my life and felt very alone,” she said. “I

didn’t have many people around me, and I was desperate to be part of some kind of normal community and to be surrounded by something – anything, really. Jess had spoken about church before, and I was curious.

“While I was there, I had an experience that I didn’t understand. God spoke to me and said: ‘I am with you’. I was very confused at

first, and I thought I was going crazy. I did start crying and Jess and her family wondered what was wrong. But then they explained to me that it was normal.

“I knew that day it was the start of something, and after that my life started to shift in so many ways. My circumstances changed, my mental health improved.

“This pushed me to learn and understand God better and learn what it means to follow Jesus. I was excited to be surrounded by wonderful, caring people at church.”

Ruby began to attend church each Sunday, discovering more about the Christian faith, and getting involved with some community activities. Her nan, who hadn’t really talked about faith either, gave her a Bible and Ruby started to study it.

She took her A-levels and started a degree in communications and media studies at the University of Gloucester. That meant living in a new place and finding a new church.

“It wasn’t easy, because it’s a bit daunting to try to join a church on your own” she said.

“I started to ask my friends and one student mentioned a church that lots of the Christian Union go to. I love that church, which is full of students. I get support each week, we have student group nights, worship nights and prayer walks.”

In the holidays, she returns to Holy Rood Church, and it was during one of their services that she was baptised by immersion in May this year. And it was the day before that

baptism when she looked in the mirror and had her revelation about identity.

“As a young teenager, it is really hard to figure yourself out and work out your own identity,” she said. “I’d worn full-face make-up since about Year 9, something that became a shield for me as I battled the beauty standards that society expects. I battled with my confidence, and it was a real fight, day-in, day-out.

“Even though I’d been exploring faith, I still wore the same amount of make-up. Then the day before I was baptised, I looked in the mirror and realised that I felt no insecurity. No self-judgement. Just peace.

‘I battled the beauty standards that society expects’

“I gave my testimony as part of the baptism service. It was a really special day with family and friends, and it felt a bit of an emotional blur. But when I talked about this aspect of my faith, people came up to me afterwards and said they could really relate to it.

“The way you perceive what individuals and people in school and college think about you, or the way that you see things on social media – it all has a really big effect on you.

“You are constantly comparing yourself to other people. But as my relationship with Jesus grew deeper, so did my confidence. Without even realising it, I was transformed from the inside out.

“Now I love God with all my heart and church means everything to me. I’d love to use my degree to do something that involves my faith in the future.”



The Rt Rev Rachel Treweek
Bishop of Gloucester

Bishop’s campaign on body image

IT was the Bishop of Gloucester who headed a campaign aimed at relieving anxiety about body image among young people.

Entitled ‘Liedentity’, it aimed to convince young people that basing your sense of value on your appearance is a lie.

Statistics suggest 60 per cent of girls opt out of everyday activities because of how they think they look. Around half of adolescent boys are unhappy with their bodies.

The initial #Liedentity social media campaign in 2018 was followed up by visits to schools and the House of Lords.

Bishop Rachel Treweek said, “We are bombarded with messages of what the ‘perfect body image’ is, and for many this undermines true identity.

“We know that for these young people having negative thoughts about how they look can impact on their entire life, causing deep unhappiness and contributing to poor mental health.

“I long for every young person to discover their worth as a unique individual created in the image of God and to who they have been created to be.”