

# I'VE BEEN RELEASED



Joe Gulliford who was part of Celebrate's first Young Leaders 'Release' initiative writes about the impact it had on him and hears from some of the newly Released!

The Release initiative began in 2010 as an investment into Celebrate's young adults; to train them and ready them for ministry and service not simply at Celebrate but across the Catholic Church. Now, more than two years later, we can recognise its fruits in the ministries of those who took part, stretching from serving at Celebrate streams at both the main conference and weekends to other conferences and initiatives at home and abroad. The impact of Release has been more, however, than simply guiding the younger generation into ministry, for it has equally seen a transformation in the lives of those involved and their purpose in life. It included a number of training weekends where this young community came together to pray, discern and receive, guided by guest speakers and members of the Celebrate team.

We were strengthened, renewed, affirmed in our unique callings, we had been 'released', for we had journeyed together and been given expectation of the opportunity that lay ahead. We had been supported by our role models and teachers, those carrying the baton of faith forward and they were pleased to give us such a blessing, so that we would be ready to receive that baton and then in time hand it on ourselves. Then following our 'release' a second group of young leaders started on Release2!

## RELEASE2

Over this last year, there has been training given at four different events including Worth Abbey, Sussex. Among the guest speakers were Pete Wynter from One Life and Matt Van Duyvenbode from The Bible Society, not to mention familiar faces like our very own Fr Paul Keane, the Joel's Bar chaplain. Release has provided a community environment with a strong support network, allowing the group to continue to pray and encourage each other through social media and accountability partnerships.

This really helped some of the group to initiate new projects within their own community.

Fran O'Neill tells us, *'I was struck by the need to start a prayer group at my uni (I'd really felt there was a need for something during my first year but was waiting for someone else to put it in front of me... God had other ideas) so with a lot of support from different Release people I started the prayer group 'Vine' and it's now a recognised society within uni... happy days! Starting and running it myself was never ever something I thought I'd be able to do but Release really empowered me and not only through prayer and encouragement but with practical elements too.'*

Sam Wells explains, *'What Release has done is show me that you can really study leadership; how other people lead and like to be led. Before, I perceived leadership as an innate attribute that some people have and some people don't. Having done the Myers Briggs test and Love Languages session, I learnt to understand leadership on a more intellectual level. My first year at university provided me with the*

*opportunity to become Chair of my Hall, leading 19 other students. Release has helped me to do this to the best of my ability, along with organising some of the best socials of the year!'*

Another member of Release2 Mike Fenn highlighted the importance of fellowship, *'Initially, I held some reservations about integrating into the group because I didn't know the others. These concerns proved unnecessary as I was welcomed in by so many generous individuals so that by the end of the course I can say I found true fellowship amongst everyone. The times of prayer during the weekends was very powerful, through others intercession a love of Scripture has been awakened in me which I hope and pray will continue to grow. Overall, I would say that the time spent with Release was very profitable; through serving at the Celebrate this Easter, it was incredibly empowering and affirming in the calling to holiness and mission.'*

## A NEW FAMILY WAS EMERGING

This time of formation is a very special time, with the group connecting more strongly with every event. This is something that has really carried through from Release1; relationships possessed a pivotal role in the affirmation and discernment of each person, it was as if a new family was emerging and embracing the coming challenges of leadership and ministry together. My personal experience of Release has allowed me to be confident in my own gifts and calling into leadership. It equipped me with, not simply the practical elements of leadership and its challenges, but with the opportunity to step forward truly affirmed and eager to spread God's kingdom, to grow in my personal relationship with Jesus, and become more like the person I have been made to be. It has been God's tool to captivate me passionately within His will. May He continue to bear fruit in us all.



Applications for Release3 will be available from Easter 2015.