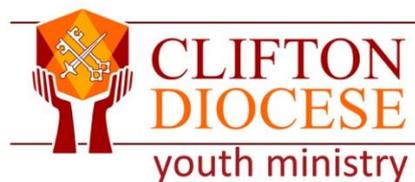




## FAITH IN ACTION AWARD

Recognising, rewarding and celebrating the active faith and service of young people.



## **Faith in Action Award**

Recognising, rewarding and celebrating the active faith and service of young people.

The CYMFed Faith in Action Award rewards young people's active service in helping to build the Kingdom of God on Earth. Many young people are doing so much to follow Jesus' example in serving others in their schools and parishes. The Faith in Action Award encourages young people to take that service into their wider community and accept greater responsibility for their faith in action.

The programme facilitates an exploration of scripture and Church teaching, with an emphasis on translating this into action. It encourages young people to shine the light of faith upon their experience of service through guided and personal reflection.

### **How does it work?**

There are four levels of award: Pin, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Participants accrue credits of service in their parish and / or school and the wider community. The Faith in Action Award builds on what young people already experience in serving others, asking them to reflect upon it so that they may find new ways of living out and exploring their faith. There is an opportunity for both guided reflections, through group reflection points and personal reflection, through journaling. At the end of the scheme, participants submit a final piece of work for moderation before being awarded their Faith in Action Award.

### **Who is the Award for?**

The Faith in Action Award is for young people aged 10-19. Young people undertake the award through their school, parish or organisation.

### **Principles**

#### **THANK YOU**

The Faith in Action Award recognises young people's service to God, the Church and others and gives the Church community the chance to say thank you to young people, thus encouraging them to do more.

#### **ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE**

The Faith in Action Award is accessible to and inclusive of all. It's open to young people from ages 10 - 19, Y6 - Y13, of any academic ability and from any faith background. Just as The Good News is for the whole human family, it is appropriate that the Faith in Action Award and its benefits are open to people of all Christian denominations and those who interact with the life of the Catholic Church either by attending a Catholic School or Parish community.

#### **CREDIBILITY AND INTEGRITY**

The Faith in Action award is not designed to be a test. It is important that the scheme should be appropriately challenging of all participants without ever failing to encourage. The challenging aspect should be presented as a call into exploration, relationship and a response to the 'big

questions of life'. This balance, which should be a key priority for catechists and leaders, gives the scheme its credibility and integrity.

#### RELATIVE

The Faith in Action Award recognises that achievement is relative to each young person. An activity worth one credit of service for one young person might be two credits for someone else because of the personal challenges faced by each individual. For example, reading at Mass for a young person who struggles with shyness or self-image may be a much bigger achievement than the same exercise undertaken by a young person who does not struggle with those issues. The Faith in Action Award entrusts the Award Leader, who knows the young people, to award credits relatively at their discretion, whilst ensuring they are being fair to all participants.

#### RAISING ASPIRATION

By acknowledging the good work young people are doing and through the process of reflection using the teachings of the Church, the Faith in Action Award allows young people to recognise the good work they are doing themselves, encouraging them to do more and thus, raises aspiration.

#### HOME AND AWAY BASE

The Faith in Action award encourages young people to engage in faith activity both in their 'home base', be that at school or in the parish, and in the wider community, their 'away base'. Working in the away base should encourage missionary discipleship. Therefore, it will naturally be work that appropriately challenges the participant to move out of their emotional and physical comfort zone.

#### **Mandatory requirements**

- 4 reflection points in a minimum of two meetings and must cover a minimum of six hours
- Each reflection point must cover God's story, Church story and personal story
- Gaining credits for service in two places ("home and away") after pin level
- The final piece of work must be submitted
- The young person must journal through the award showing service and reflection on it
- Some celebration at the end of the award

#### **Service**

The Faith in Action Award rewards the active service of young people to others and the Church both in their local and wider community. This service is recorded using a credit system which escalates with the progression of the award. For the award to have meaning, it is vital that participants feel challenged and supported in their service so that they encounter personal and spiritual growth. What is important, therefore, is not that a specific list of activities is completed and ticked off, but rather that the experiences help move the participants forward on their faith journey. The most valuable resource of this award scheme is the leader and the relationship they foster with the participants. It is this dynamic, played out in a faith context which will allow for informed guidance and decision making at each point in the process.

Service can be through social action, active participation and contribution in liturgical celebrations, fundraising etc. Some more specific examples of service include reading at Mass, volunteering in Lourdes, organising a fundraising event. More examples of service activities can be downloaded [here](#).

### **Home and Away**

The Faith in Action Award encourages young people to take their faith into the wider community through the home and away from the base credit system. If a young person's Faith in Action Award group is based in a parish, that is where their 'home' credits are gained. Their 'away' credits can be gained in school or through an activity or organisation not based in the parish. If the young person does not attend a Catholic school, they can still gain credits at school for volunteering activities with a Christian ethos of serving others. For example, a non-Catholic school may organise shoebox/hamper appeals at Christmas, visit the elderly in nursing homes, organise fundraising activities for disaster appeals etc.

In a school-based group, the 'home' credits are gained through school-led activities. If a participant is Catholic they should be encouraged to gain at least some of their away credits in their local parish, even if the connection up to this point has been limited. The Award Leader should support this engagement by informing local clergy about the Faith in Action Award and that they may have young people looking for volunteering opportunities.

### **Reflection Points**

Reflection, both personal and guided, form the heart of the Faith in Action Award. Although receipt of a Faith in Action Award depends largely upon the number of service credits accrued, ensuring youth people are given the time and space to reflect on their service is integral to this scheme. This is achieved through both guided Reflection Points and participants keeping a personal journal

Making space for reflection gives young people the opportunity to engage with, and explore, God's story and the Church's story, which in turn will help strengthen the foundations of their personal faith journey.

The Faith in Action Award marries both learning and experience and then allows young people the time to reflect upon how their learning and experience has had an effect upon them.

Guided Reflection is designed to be flexible, allowing schools and parishes to deliver it in a way that best suits the needs of both of their participants and them as an organisation. Reflections should be delivered in a creative and engaging way. Each reflection point requires three objectives to be met: explore, understand and reflect. However, there is no right or wrong way of delivering a Reflection Point, so long as the objectives are fulfilled.

Reflection Points are based on themes on love and service; there are two strands within each theme.

- LOVE
  - We are loved
  - Loving our neighbour
- SERVICE
  - Building the Kingdom of God
  - Servant Leadership

Across an award year, participants must take part in a total of 6 hours of guided reflection, led by an adult. There is a minimum requirement of two reflection points, one from each theme. The reflection points can be split into shorter sessions, as long as the total time amounts to 6 hours. Award Leaders may wish to plan four 90 minute sessions using all four strands. Reflection Points are undertaken as a group.

The Faith in Action award facilitates a Christian commitment to the community. In the context of their service to their local and wider community, participants are encouraged to reflect upon how their faith, when put into action, shapes not only them but the rest of society

### **Format of Reflection Points**

#### 1. The Faith in Action Prayer

Every Reflection Point starts with the Faith in Action Prayer.

#### 2. The Good News

A piece of scripture, relevant to the theme of the reflection point, can be read in order to reinforce the theme and to give participants an initial insight into how their acts of service are part of a bigger picture. For example, if using the theme of love, the piece of scripture could be John 15:12-17 - "This is my commandment, love one another, as I have loved you..."

#### 3. The Church Story

This element of the Reflection Point allows young people to engage with the Church's teachings of love and service. This can be done by listening to extracts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, quotes from the Holy Father & Apostolic Exultations, and by learning more about how Saints and other exemplary Christians responded to their vocation by serving others.

#### 4. Personal Story

Young people are given the chance to share their recent experience and Faith in Action journey in light of the key texts and stories they have listened to. This gives them chance to reflect on what all of the above says about faith and what it is saying to them.

#### 5. Activity

Providing a simple activity for the young people to participate in will help them to engage more fully with scripture, the Church's story and their personal story. Activities could include team building exercises, discussion between participants, arts and craft activities, mind-mapping, or writing

## 6. Liturgy

The reflection points should conclude with a liturgy. Doing so will help remind participants that their acts of love and service are directly related to their personal calling from God.

The format for Reflection Points is based on the good practice through modelling the RCIA model of Catechesis. This includes:

- The Good News - Sacred Scripture
- The Church Story - Scripture & Tradition and the lives of the Holy men and women
- Personal Story - The personal reflection of the participants based upon their experience

### **Journal**

Jesus taught us the value of regularly taking the time to reflect upon both thoughts and actions. Through meaningful reflection, we can achieve personal and spiritual growth. Throughout their Faith in Action journey, young people should use a journal to record their experiences and feelings during the award year. Just as a guided reflection as a group forms the heart of the Faith in Action Award, it is in the personal reflection that young people really grow in relationship with God. Young people submit their journal on completion of their award along with their final piece of work. Their journal provides both the moderator of the work and the young person with evidence of their spiritual development.

Towards the end of their Faith in Action journey, young people submit a final piece of work which evidences their spiritual journey during the award. As the Faith in Action Award is accessible and inclusive, this final piece does not have to be an essay; we encourage young people to be creative as possible. Examples of the final piece of work could be:

- Song
- Written piece (no more than two sides of A4)
- Artwork
- Video
- Presentation
- Poem

Whatever medium the young person chooses to use for their final piece, it should show their experience, learning reflection and faith. Provided that the participant has engaged properly with the scheme and has been well-led through the reflection points, with a well-kept journal, there should be no question of passing or failing. Final pieces of work are moderated, not marked. It is in this moderation that their leaders can provide encouragement to the young person.

## **Moderation**

Provided that the participant has engaged properly with the scheme and has been well-led through the reflection points, with a well-kept journal, there should be no question of passing or failing.

The principal role of the moderator is to congratulate those whose work has been submitted and hopefully in so doing encourage them to move on to successive stages of the award. To enable this, it is envisaged that any shortcomings in the final piece submitted are identified at Participating Organisation level by the Award Leader, who should refer these back to the participant to address before submission for moderation.

## **How the Award is run**

The Faith in Action is managed at three levels. The Awarding Authority, which is usually a diocese, is the link between CYMFed and those running the award at a local level, in participating organisations. Participating Organisations are schools and parishes running the award. Award Leaders within participating organisations are responsible for the day to day running of the award and the interaction with participants.

In order to launch the award in your parish or a school, the parish or school concerned should register with their local Awarding Authority as a Participating Organisation. Once registered, the Awarding Authority will guide you in running the Award.

The award is designed to run during an academic year. In order for young people and Award Leaders to get the best out of the Faith in Action Award, it is recommended that the key milestones during that year's programme are provisionally agreed before the process begins. These milestones would normally be:

- A launch event
- Reflection points as a group (6 hours in total)
- Deadline for the completion and submission of the final piece of work
- Date of, and arrangements for, the final award ceremony.

The Awarding Authority is your main point of contact for support. Recognising that each diocese is different to the next, the Faith in Action Award is flexible to best suit the needs of the schools and parishes in that area. As a result, each Awarding Authority will run the scheme a little differently to others. The Award Leader should liaise closely with the Awarding Authority for arrangements for moderation of the final piece of work and celebration and align timelines accordingly.

## Testimonials

Bishop Terry Draine, Bishop of Middlesbrough

*I would like young people to come to know Christ Jesus who will lead us in truth to the joy of the Gospel. This award scheme will enable so many young people to grow in discipleship and experience their faith as a lived reality, ever more moving from mind and heart into deed.*

Charlotte

*The Faith in Action Award gave me the change to explore my faith in a more intimate way with those around me. My experience taught me leadership, determination and most of all, new ways to love.*

Bishop Ralph Heskett, Bishop of Hallam and Bishop for Youth

*The Faith in Action Award recognises young people as the experts of their own lives, giving them a sense of responsibility and valuing them as having something unique to offer. It helps them connect their life and faith in a tangible manner.*

This information and more can be found at: <https://faithinactionaward.co.uk/>