

Catholic Peoples Weeks

One of the Church's best kept secrets?

There is always something of a little glimpse of heaven about living in community at a CPW!

Wow! That is a fantastic claim! But it ties in with my feelings when I come back from a Catholic Peoples Week, with my batteries recharged. Participation in these weeks has probably been the one single way that my faith has not only been kept alive, but rejuvenated and refreshed in the last 30 years.

Others have written that:

"We were able to be ourselves – eating, playing, praying and talking together"

"I left with renewed hope for our Church and nourished by this joyful experience"

"Where else would you find teenagers voluntarily going to a philosophy seminar in their own time?"

"I experienced a feeling of spirituality and the opportunity to grow, be changed and develop new ideas, and added to that - fun, laughter and friendship were there in bucket loads"

"We enjoyed vibrant prayer times, jubilant celebrations of the Eucharist and some creative and memorable liturgies"

"Why can't we live here always?" (from a four year old)

"CPW is soooooo cool it is the best fun you can have on a holiday" (from a teenager)



What is so special about these weeks that have had young and old enthuse about them in such glowing terms? For over 65 years CPW have been providing 'a holiday with a difference' and for many families these have been an integral part of their holiday. But a Catholic Peoples Week is much more than a holiday. It is an opportunity to experience a truly Chris-



tian community in which people of all ages, literally from 0-90+ feel valued and at home for one week of the year.

What sort of people go to Catholic Peoples Weeks?

The answer could be, all sorts and not only families but single people and from all walks of life, but particularly those who want to deepen their knowledge of their faith and have their heart, mind and spirit revitalized, and to meet others of like mind in a way that is not always possible in their home parishes. Indeed they go back to their parishes with their batteries recharged and ready to serve there refreshed.

What happens at a CPW event?

Events can be a week long or just a weekend, for all ages (family weeks) or just for over 18s, walking weeks, self catered or fully catered. Most take place in schools or retreat houses or small conference centres in various parts of the country but usually in places of outstanding natural beauty. Weeks are run by volunteers consisting of a chair, who is responsible for the theme and an organiser who looks after the practical side. Each week has a chaplain whose role is vital. Then, at family weeks, there is a team of helpers who look after the children in age groups during the adult sessions.

Every CPW event is centred on a theme. For adults this is explored through a variety of talks (some given by outside speakers eminent in their fields), discussions, workshops etc. For the children,

the helpers are trained to use their ingenuity in as many ways as possible to engage the youngsters in stimulating and fun filled activities, on something to do with the theme according to their age.

What is the timetable to be expected?

There are sessions in the mornings, free time in the afternoons to be with your family or to enjoy time in the swimming pool, another session after the evening meal, and some time for relaxation in the bar in the evenings with organized entertainment. The last night there is always a fantastic concert at which young and old show off their extraordinary talents. On most weeks there is daily mass and mornings and night prayers which members are encouraged to take turns to prepare. These liturgies have proved inspirational over the years and have deepened our understanding of the Eucharist as central to our Christian community life.



What about cost?

A CPW is always value for money as with all the entertainment included there is rarely any need to spend more money but there is also a Friendship Fund to which members contribute and which enables individuals or families to come to an event without bearing the full cost, should their circumstances make it hard for them to do so.

Where could the UCM fit in?

UCM members might well enjoy such weeks themselves but they would also be an excellent choice of a holiday for those who apply to our 'Rest Homes'. UCM might subsidise people to go on a CPW and top up what they might receive through the Friendship Fund. They would be especially suitable for single parents, since the children are so well catered for and they themselves would have the stimulation of adult company and the support of a very sympathetic community as well as the opportunity to learn more about their faith. Single people would also find a welcome and support and the possibility of making new friends for life. So think about it Welfare Officers.

Other UCM members – why not give it a go? Not many are disappointed - once they have been they want to go again. You feel part of a family, and many children who have been with their own families come back as helpers and then as parents of the next generation of CPW families.

"It's like a celebration of all the very best things about being a Catholic."



Agnes Milne, Justice and Peace Officer,
Northampton Diocese

Find out more online at
www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org.uk
The 2013 brochure will be out in January.