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Saints for young people

James Kelliher recently started working at Westminster Youth Ministry, a department of the Archdiocese of Westminster in London, UK. Now pictures of three saints welcome visitors to the centre.

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When I started working for the Diocese of Westminster in September, I wanted to shake things up in a number of ways. One of the things I wanted to do was increase

people's familiarity with the saints. I believe they have such interesting stories and many valuable insights into life and connecting with God.

And so, in our reception at the Centre for Youth Ministry, I replaced three generic posters for ones with photos and quotes from three saints. I chose St Thérèse of Lisieux, soon-to-be St John Paul II and St Josemaría Escrivá.

I chose St Thérèse for somewhat personal reasons. My Brazilian former girlfriend loved the saint and considered Thérèse to be her best friend. This naturally got me interested in learning more. The more I read, the more I found her life story inspiring and one that could move others. Being a young saint, young people can easily connect with her, and her spirituality of the little way is very much in tune with what we need in 21st Century Britain. I've

now bought various books about her life and teachings and, about a month ago, I was fortunate to be able to visit Lisieux.

Josemaría Escrivá was also chosen for personal reasons. During my five months in Rio, I lived with a Brazilian family. The father of the family is a member of Opus Dei and he took me to visit the Opus Dei centre in Rio. I also met another person from Opus Dei, who was a colleague from Argentina, and so this got me more interested to read about St Josemaría. At his canonisation Pope John Paul II called him the saint of ordinary life, so he has a lot to say to young people struggling with the ordinary challenges of life.

One of things I really liked about John Paul II was the great quote at the beginning of *Fides et Ratio*: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the

contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.” It’s so eloquent, inspiring and charismatic – this is what we need to do, and that is why I included this quote under his picture. We need to speak to others with the confident, unwavering and bold language that comes from knowing we are Christ’s disciples. Young people can learn from John Paul II’s fearlessness in doing what needs to be done.

In a time when young people are so corrupted by the prevailing social norms, these saints should be role models for the youth, to show them there is a better way of living. These saints, with their virtues and flaws, are there for them, to teach them and guide them towards the light, like a

lighthouse guiding boats to safety
amidst the storm.

James Kelliher

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