

## **Knock Summer Youth Festival 2009**

### **Knock-Knock, who's there??**

Our Ladys Shrine in Knock has over 1.6 million visitors a year. When most people think of the average age of these visitors they may well be right in thinking it's the older generation that make up this number, however hundreds of young people flock to Knock for the annual Knock Summer Youth Festival. This time of year Knock is truly alive and buzzing with young people. The Knock Summer Youth Festival has been running for the past 8 years. This year the festival will take place from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July to the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. Hundreds of young people from all over the world will camp over three nights near the spot where the Virgin Mary appeared to a group of local people in 1879.

Young people will come in their hundreds with sleeping bags in tow for a festival experience different to any other. A group of Franciscan brothers from the Bronx who are currently working in Moyross will head up share groups, Fr. Peter Mc Verry, the Jesuit priest who has devoted his life to working with Dublin's homeless drug addicts will discuss the power of Christian living. There will also be groups who pray through hip-hop dancing, meditation, art and drumming, these are all to top the bill at the festival this summer. The festival will see giant marques erected in the grounds of the Marian Shrine for four days between July 23 and July 26.

Last years festival saw more than 700 young people from all over the country, Europe and further afield to celebrate their faith with inspiring talks, workshops, a moving candlelight healing service and gospel, folk and rock music by faith inspired band *Elation Ministries*. Bishop Mc Keown who celebrated the final mass at last years' festival; remarked "it was an exciting time in the church to see so many young people out to celebrate their faith". In a new addition to the festival line up, a number of 'mind, body and soul' style workshops have been added to the festival programme. Hip hop champion Don King, who recently appeared on RTE reality show *Ballet Chancers*, will deliver a workshop on dance "through hip hop dancing I can

share my faith and connect, influence and inspire young people of this generation whilst having fun at the same time” says dancer Don King. Percussion group The Psalm Drummers are hoping young Catholics can use bongos to tap into the heartbeat of God.

Fr. Louis Hughes, OP will introduce the festivalgoers to a workshop that aims to promote relaxation of breath and spiritual trust. “Participants will be helped to become more deeply aware of the ways in which the breath moves within them and to recognise and respond to the particular difficulties they may encounter in breathing- and to experience where all of this leads us spiritually” said Fr. Hughes he continued “breath and spirit are intimately connected, like two sides of one coin. Yet our technology-based culture has introduced an artificial split between the two.

Plans are also in the pipeline for a luxurious ‘chill-out’ lounge complete with acoustic sessions and plenty of time to sit with an endless cup of coffee, and meet up with new, like-minded people.

In a move to help stimulate the return of Ireland’s youth to the Catholic Church, reflected in the festival’s theme ‘you are the light of the world’ the Bishops Of Ireland have given the event their full support.

‘The festival is really a chance for young people to come to Knock and experience something different to every other weekend, it’s a chance for them to realise they are the light of the world. We hope to facilitate a connection between young people and Christ, and help them to get plugged in, and switched on’ says one of the main organisers, 23 year old, Helen Toner.~

Fr. Peter Mc Verry SJ, one of the main speakers, will talk on what he labelled ‘the empty ideas’ of the receding Celtic Tiger and promote instead ‘radical solidarity’ through the ideas of ‘authentic Christianity’. I would certainly agree that young people are the future of the church because they have idealism to bring about change not only in our Church but also in our society’ said Fr. Mc Verry, SJ.

The internationally acclaimed Redemptorist scripture scholar and author Fr. Denis Mc Bride is travelling from the U.K to address the festival. His main area of interest and writing has been the human story and the gospels. His work has always struggled to keep open the conversation between the drama of people's lives and the four great narratives of Christian beginnings. Knock Summer Youth Festival is a great weekend for young people to celebrate their faith and take pride in who they are.

There will be free buses coming from every dioceses in the country to the Marian Shrine so if your between the ages of 18-35, mark it in your diary, grab your sleeping bag, find out where your bus is going from and get to Knock for an experience different to any other your going to get this Summer.

For further information on Knock Summer Youth Festival visit [www.knock-shrine.ie/youthfestival](http://www.knock-shrine.ie/youthfestival) or contact Knock Youth Ministry by telephone (094) 9388100, 0876927850. Alternately you can e-mail [knockyouthministry@yahoo.ie](mailto:knockyouthministry@yahoo.ie).

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