



FLAME YOUTH CONGRESS

Archbishop Nichols' Eucharistic Adoration Reflection

WEMBLEY ARENA, 24 MARCH 2012

Today there are many voices in the media and in advertising telling you what to wear, how to look, what size you should be, what clothes you should buy. And there is a risk that if we do not look like that, cannot afford to dress like that, somehow we are made to feel second class. That can lead us to think very negatively about ourselves.

Then the Olympics and Paralympics come along and we see athletes at peak physical fitness, we see lots of adverts with shining sportspeople, and we might again wonder about who we are.

So it is good for you to know what the Catholic Church thinks of you, what Christ thinks of you. Let me tell you what that is: You are God-given, precious, loved and loveable. You do not need to conform to someone else's image of perfection; instead, look deeply within, pray, discover and recognise your gifts and talents, and then live them. A wonderful Saint, Francis de Sales, said, "Be who you are. Be it well. And all for the Glory of God." Pope Benedict invites you – all of you – to be "Saints of the Twenty First Century", telling you that "your lives will bear abundant fruit for the growth of the civilisation of love."

All of this is given even deeper meaning by what we are about to experience here, in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. God takes what is ordinary – ordinary bread and ordinary wine – and transforms it into the extraordinary – the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. In your creation, God took what was ordinary – the particles and dust of the earth – and made it into something extraordinary: you.

So in the silence and prayer that will come in just a few minutes time, consider this. Consider the love of God which brought you into existence. Consider how total that love is, for it brought Jesus to give himself entirely for you and to you, on the Cross and here in the Blessed Sacrament. In this light you are truly extraordinary. Maybe you have never thought that before. We won't all be Olympic or Paralympic athletes, but we definitely all have our races to run, our finishing lines to cross. Consider the people you have heard today – the athletes, the Mizen family, Fr Timothy, Fr Christopher and Sr Catherine. Are there things in their words that have encouraged you? What are the gifts that the Lord has given to you, that he might fan into a flame, to share with the world? Name these gifts, and ask God to help you to use them well, always for the glory of His name.

Archbishop Vincent Nichols

Archbishop of Westminster