

Where is the meaning in my life?

In our society there are many different religions. Statistically, three of the largest are Christianity; Islam and Judaism. It is easy to spot the differences between faiths but sometimes it is very important to discover the similarities that unite the different ethnicities together. When these three religions come together it is easy to spot the main similarity which they all share. They all worship the same universal God.

With this in mind, a group of intrigued students between the ages of fourteen and fifteen from St Mary's RC High School took part in a conference on Tuesday the 18th of October with two other high schools based on the question: 'Where is the meaning in my life?'. The conference was hosted at Wigmore high school and gave participating students the opportunity to engage and learn about different religions and people from other ethnic, culture and faith backgrounds.

This conference was held with the intention that students would learn more about each other religions, culture and personal beliefs and to encourage tolerance and understanding of different ethnicities. Students were brought together and challenged to engage with each other discovering where meaning is in our lives.



The different workshops were held by leaders from the different faiths. The different aspects of the workshops helped us to learn more about their religion and to draw links to our own religious beliefs.



The first Islamic workshop was run by a practicing Muslim lady called Salma Piperdy who talked about where she found the meaning in her life and explained how a Muslim woman would live her life. We also took part in activities to help our understanding of how we related the meaning of our life to materialistic objects. The objective of the workshop was for us to understand the life of a Muslim and bring us closer to finding our own meaning.

In the second Islamic workshop which a male Muslim Razwan educated us about how Art can reflect and express the awe and wonder of God, spirituality, faith and prayer. We took part in activities studying Arabic and to explore the reliability of religious and scientific statements. The objectives of the activities carried out in the workshop were to increase our understanding of God in everyday life especially through the life of a Muslim artist.

In the Jewish workshop Jane educated us on the religious way of life for Jews. In groups we dressed in the traditional Jewish dress code and carried out traditional rituals such as Shabbat, the weekly day of rest observed from sundown on Friday to Saturday night. We also experienced some of the traditional food used in religious rituals and conversed about the symbolism of food in each religion which we found we had many in common.



In the Christian workshop we talked about the meaning and importance of music in the Christian faith. We explored the history of the use of music in religion and how we use it to worship God. During the workshop we interpreted the Hymn 'Amazing Grace' and how music can express someone's relationship with God. We attempted writing our own hymn and discussed other forms of praise and how we use it similarly in our religions. We also discussed what brings the meaning to our life.



At the end of the day we reviewed our experiences and the positive affect that they had on us and to our views on other religions and if our views had changed. We explored how the experience brought us together and we concluded through group presentations that we have our differences but more often we are similar people looking for a meaningful life.

The students of each school developed their understanding of each other's faith individually and as a school, altogether the cultural differences between each school faded and by the end of the day we realised these three faiths came together to become branches off of the concept, we all worship one universal God.

Overall the day was really enjoyable and many of us made friends from the different schools exchanging emails, numbers and face books!

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