

Meet ten amazing young Catholics

1. Paschal Uche



Paschal Uche is the personable young man who welcomed Pope Benedict outside Westminster Cathedral during the papal visit to Britain last September. Paschal, 22, is a pharmacy student from east London and was chosen by the Diocese of Brentwood to personally welcome the Holy Father on behalf of young Catholics.

A global television and internet audience of several million saw Paschal giving a speech of welcome to the Pope, and he was splashed all over the BBC, the Daily Telegraph and Sky News. He then summoned the nerve to shake Pope Benedict's hand and ask him for a blessing.

The Pope replied with the words: "Thank you for your warm welcome." The Pope was also given a royal welcome by 2,500 other young Catholics gathered in the piazza of the Cathedral. The first anniversary of the Pope's visit is now approaching and many consider that the joyous greeting that Paschal gave the Pope dispersed a lot of the negativity in the mainstream media about how the Pope would be received in Britain.

Paschal is known for having a lively evangelising spirit, and he made three videos for Westminster diocese's website which encouraged young British Catholics to become pilgrims at World Youth Day in Madrid. The videos were released on the UK Papal Visit Facebook page.

2. Lila Rose

Lila Rose is only 23, but since founding Live Action eight years ago she has done some of the most influential pro-life campaign work to date.

Lila is best known for her sting operations where she has exposed alleged abuses committed by America's largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood. For the past five years Lila has visited their

clinics all over the US, wearing police video cameras to document staff practices.

Using the new media to make these known, Live Action YouTube videos have attracted millions of hits. In February Lila told The Catholic Herald that even ardent supporters of Planned Parenthood are becoming “disgusted”.

Lila was raised a Protestant but converted two years ago to Catholicism because she hungered for the Eucharist.

Most recently, Lila has turned her attention to upholding the US bishops’ firm guidelines that abortion doctors must not be employed by Catholic hospitals. She runs peaceful information stands outside Catholic hospitals that employ abortion doctors as full-time staff.

She has spoken about her work and the role of young Catholics in the public square at two World Youth Day events, the International Youth Coalition’s conference and Viva Vida Pro-Life Youth Festival.

3. James Bradley

James Bradley is a pioneering transitional deacon of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. He read the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* in November 2009 when he was 25 and studying to be an Anglican priest. In March 2011 he joined the personal ordinariate.

James and 38 other members from St John the Baptist Anglo-Catholic parish in Sevenoaks, Kent, crossed the Tiber together during Holy Week this year.

He and Daniel Lloyd were the only Anglican deacons to join the Personal Ordinariate in the first wave. They hope to be ordained as Catholic priests.

James acted as deacon at Pope Benedict’s welcoming liturgy at World Youth Day last week. He sang the Gospel, which was the parable of the house built on rock, in front of almost a million people. The Gospel was especially apt, as the very nature of the personal ordinariate is that Anglo-Catholics may keep their traditions, but continue to build their faith on the permanence of rock-solid papal authority, which reaches right back to St Peter.

James went to World Youth Day with vocations exploration group *Quo Vadis?* He also helps with the Ordinariate Portal website, which has attracted over 300,000 readers, and took part in the Vatican Blogmeet in May. He continues to harness new media to spread the word about *Anglicanorum Coetibus*, and is on Twitter as [@jamesdbradley](https://twitter.com/jamesdbradley).

Bradley is a surname from both Old English and Irish, meaning broad field or wood. It is an appropriate name for so enthusiastic a labourer in Our Lord’s pasture.

4. Rocco Palmo

Rocco Palmo, 28, from Philadelphia, is perhaps the world’s leading Catholic blogger. Known

sometimes as the Church Whisperer, he has written the Whispers in the Loggia blog, which focuses on recording the life of the Catholic Church in North America, since 2004.

Cardinals and bishops have on occasion made Rocco privy to sensitive information and has broken the news of appointments to major American archdioceses long before the mainstream media.

In 2010, in recognition of Rocco's great ability to use the blogosphere to communicate the message of the Church, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Aquinas Institute of Theology. He has commented on Catholic affairs for a wide variety of media outlets, including the New York Times, Washington Post and the BBC.

He was a guest speaker at the recent Vatican Blogmeet, where he spoke about how Catholics can use blogs to share their beliefs with a limitless number of people. Rocco recently reported on World Youth Day in Madrid and his riveting posts gave an international internet audience a chance to savour the atmosphere and great developments at this year's event.

5. Leah Darrow

The American public got to know Leah Darrow from her time appearing on the television show *America's Next Top Model* and from her days as a model in New York. But after a dramatic change of heart Leah made a huge career change: from modelling for FHM magazine to being a full-time chastity speaker.

Leah was born on a small farm in Oklahoma to loving Catholic parents, but during her heyday as a model didn't take her faith seriously. But one day she had a road-to-Damascus conversion at a fashion shoot and God showed her that her soul was being damaged by the modelling industry.

Leah left her high-profile modelling career and now works full-time for *Catholic Answers*, America's biggest lay-run apologetics organisation.

She criss-crosses the United States and speaks to thousands about her conversion and why she advocates chastity. She shares with her audience the huge pressure that she was put under to be more sexually provocative when she was posing for fashion shoots and how this compromised her Catholic faith.

Now 28, Leah appears on several secular television programmes, as well as on EWTN. In July she spoke about chastity and youth on a United Nations' panel.

6. Manny Pacquiao

Boxing idol and politician Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines is leading many boxing fans to the Catholic faith by his example.

Manny is 32 but has been a pro boxer since the age of 16. The eight-division world champion who has won 10 world titles is a committed Catholic who frequently acknowledges that his sporting achievements are blessings from God.

Before each boxing match he kneels in prayer, asking for the grace that he needs to win the fight. After each bout, he organises a Mass of thanksgiving, thanking God that neither he nor his opponent have been harmed.

Manny grew up in grinding poverty and his pious mother thought he would become a priest. He chose to get married and have a family. When he is not in the ring he devotes himself to helping the poor in his home country.

In his own neighbourhood he has given financial help to hundreds of local children so that they could make it through school. Manny was elected as a member of the Filipino parliament in 2010 and has fought against the controversial Reproductive Health Bill, which if introduced would mean that health practitioners in the Philippines would encourage the use of condoms and contraceptives. He supports the Church hierarchy in its opposition to contraception and has also opposed a bill to legalise divorce.

Manny has been pilloried by his more liberal political colleagues, but he maintains that marriage is an institution that should not be violated by lawmakers and that better marriage preparation must be provided instead.

7. Jeff Grabosky

On May 20 this year, New Jersey's Jeff Grabosky became the 18th person to run across the United States.

Jeff, 28, is unashamedly Catholic and began his run on the west coast of America on January 20, the feast of St Sebastian, the patron saint of athletes. He woke at 4 am each morning, and over the course of 121 days ran up to 65 miles a day until he reached the east coast of America, in total covering 2,300 miles on foot, the equivalent of more than 141 marathons.

Jeff, a graduate of Notre Dame University and a great believer in the power of prayer, decided that he would not do this epic run for any particular charity, but for prayer. Jeff's beloved mother passed away in October 2006, and he did the run in her memory.

Jeff's run was an arduous pilgrimage. Each day he prayed continually. At all times Jeff carried a rosary ring and invited people to leave prayer requests on his website. He promised at least a decade for each intention. Many of the prayer intentions concerned sick children, which motivated Jeff to pray all the harder and he offered up the physical pain of the run for them.

This September Jeff will start work as a teaching assistant in a Catholic primary school in Phoenix, Arizona. To keep up to date with Jeff, or to submit a prayer request, log on to [his website](#).

8. Robert Colquoun

Robert Colquhoun is a British grassroots pro-life activist and leader of last year's inaugural 40 Days for Life event in London.

He encourages those opposed to abortion to pray on the footpaths surrounding clinics. He also

distributes pro-life literature to the general public and advises pregnant women on where they may get help to continue their pregnancy.

Robert, 29, is from Oxfordshire. He holds a degree in history and spent some time discerning a vocation to the priesthood. He is a convert from Anglicanism and wrote an inspirational booklet that upholds Mother Church's teachings on sexuality called *Finding Love in a Superficial Age*.

Robert has travelled all over the country giving talks to school students on chastity and defends the Church's steadfast teaching against IVF.

In July, during Lewisham People's Day, Robert gathered a group of nine young people to run a large, colourful pro-life stall that had beautiful pictures of an unborn baby developing in the womb. The hundreds of local people who milled around the stall had the chance to learn that life begins at conception.

The next 40 Days for Life event in London is fast approaching and will be held outside BPAS abortion clinic in Bedford Square from September 28 to November 6.

9. Matthew Fradd

Matthew Fradd, 28 is a native of Australia and a steadfast Catholic, but he was agnostic until he had a profound conversion at World Youth Day in Rome in 2000.

Matthew has travelled as a missionary in Canada, Texas and Ireland, speaking to thousands of teenagers about the Gospel and love of Christ. But he has developed his ministry towards spiritual renewal for people who are fixated on pornography.

Matthew acknowledges that there was a time in his own life when he was addicted to porn, and that it was only through reciting the rosary and turning himself over to Our Lady that he overcame this compulsion. He continues to fast and pray that he does not succumb to porn again.

He has since journeyed all over the world giving talks about the dangers of pornography. Not content to just talk in church halls, Matthew bravely organises talks about the grim reality of porn in clubs or bars.

In 2009 he set up the site ThePornEffect.com, which gets about 7,000 visitors a day and has fascinating articles from people who worked in the porn industry and offers help on how to overcome obsession with porn.

He now lives in Donegal with his wife and two children. In June he announced that he has started writing a book for Catholic Answers.

10. Fr Andrew Pinsent

Fr Andrew Pinsent, a priest of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, was ordained in 2005 and in the following six years has undertaken many groundbreaking ventures.

He is both research director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Religion and Science at Oxford University, and a member of the Faculty of Theology at Oxford.

Part of the academic research that he is presently undertaking examines how science can illuminate our understanding of personhood and also develop the traditional proofs for the existence of God.

He co-founded the Evangelium Project, which provides innovative resources for proclaiming the Gospel in the modern world, in affiliation with the Catholic Truth Society. In 2006 he published the critically acclaimed Evangelium catechetical course. As Fr Pinsent has explained on EWTN, his previous experience working in advertising before becoming a priest helped him to present the faith in an attractive way.

This August Fr Pinsent ran the fourth Evangelium Conference and spoke on the recovery of Sacred Scripture.

Along with his long-time collaborator Fr Marcus Holden he has written a number of CTS books, including Credo, which explains the faith, and Lumen, a remarkable book that shows the great things that Catholics have given civilisation.

Mary O'Regan - Catholic Herald