

Reading for Year 7 and 8 Cathedral Service

Thursday 7 October 2021

Well, this is a novelty isn't it. A Cathedral service especially for you in Years 7 and 8. In normal times we'd have one of these a month – for everyone – so every year group, all of the teachers and support staff, the choir, the prefects, the organ – the whole shooting match as the saying goes. It's quite a tourist attraction when the whole of Bishop's turns out, best bib and tucker, to completely fill the nave (the bit you're in right now) and the transepts. Cathedral services are such a big thing that visitors try to get in to spectate, parents and governors come for the experience and even the Cathedral Guides stop to gaze. This morning though, is special – just 320 or so of you plus the choir.

It is difficult to get your head around this place isn't it? Columns and paving stones, tombs and arches, a feeling that you're in a house built by giants – for giants. I still feel all of that, even after over 20 years of coming in here, I still get bowled over by the wonder of it all – and the wonder that it stands still, after over 7 centuries without physical foundations. Not only is Bishop's your school, the only state school in a Cathedral Close, you also have a medieval miracle in the back yard!

So this will be the very first time that you've come here as a Bishop's student wearing your blazer with the three bells – those are the coat of arms of our founder, Bishop John Wordsworth. For some of you it might even be the first time in the Cathedral! It's yet another first for you at your school – just as true for the old hands in Year 8 as it is for Year 7 – as we all emerge from the fog of the pandemic. I hope that you all enjoy and remember the experience.

I spoke at a Year 7 assembly last week in the Sports Hall. I hope that some of you might even remember that! The picture that I described in that talk was one of lots of individual building blocks, yet to find their place in building something rather wonderful. There are lots of people in school who are older than you, and may seem more important than you. That's an illusion. You are the future for Bishop's. In Cathedral services in the future you will pick up the baton – you will become the prefects, the ushers, the choristers, the musicians. It matters that you see your place in your school, that you feel at home in here, that you play your part. In the words of John, the school is the vine, and you are the many branches. An older metaphor, but the meaning is unchanged.

This morning is important then. When you get home tonight and mum or dad asks you what you did today try to give them some feeling for what it's like, sitting in the nave amidst gothic splendour, knowing that you have begun your Bishop's journey in earnest.