



# Alton Castle Retreat of Prayer, Reflection and Meditation



On **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**, Year 6 left school for a three day retreat at Alton Castle, Staffordshire.

As well as the excitement of a short break with their friends, they also took part in a number of different activities, trekking, rock climbing, biking, survival and archery.

With the theme of the retreat being Discipleship, each activity included reflection, discussion and prayer. Everyone was challenged and encouraged to find hidden strength, learn new skills, and show perseverance in their individual and team challenges and continually reflecting on the virtues Grateful and Generous.

Their first activity on Monday evening was the Night Line. Here the children were impressive as they demonstrated their teamwork and trust in each other, as they made their way down through the trees (and rain!!) whilst being blindfolded. It was remarkable to see each of the children supporting those around them.

During Tuesday and Wednesday, the children were split into four groups for their activities. One physical challenge was the trek to Ina's Rock. Using their orienteering and map skills, the children found their way across farmland, the stream and through the trees before finding their way home. A real highlight was the catwalk competition to make their way across the bridge. Those that took part in the biking and the activity course were taught how to work as part of a team and the importance of perseverance. Finally, during survival, the children thought about the essential things needed for survival: shelter, water and a food supply. They were able to build their own shelters and create fire using flint and steel. They all agreed that the highlight of the survival activity was enjoying the toasted marshmallows and hot chocolate – this was especially welcomed due to the cold damp weather but the children got completely involved in every activity and the rain did not deter them.

On the final evening Father Paul and our Parish Priest Father Long, celebrated Mass; this was a most spiritual and uplifting occasion as the children and adults shared the Liturgy together. The activities were all delivered by a team of young people (aged from 18 years to 22 years old) who are predominantly waiting to go on to University, staying for one year, living and working as part of the Alton Castle Community. This team brought the Castle and the programme to life. They acted as wonderful, enthusiastic role models for the children on retreat, both from a spiritual point of view and through the energy and enthusiasm they have for life.

The retreat offered Year 6 an opportunity to bond and reflect upon their life and faith journey so far. It was also an occasion for the children to look ahead to their final year together at Primary School, which will conclude in July 2020 when they will receive the special Sacrament of Confirmation.

Alton Castle Retreat September 2020 has already been booked....start getting excited Year 5!

