

I didn't know someone so young could become a saint!

The beatification ceremony was amazing, the sun was splitting the rocks and for miles around all you could see was a sea of people coming to take part in this occasion. Before I went I understood Chiara Luce to be a person who had an amazing outlook on life, who was able to wholeheartedly say 'Yes' to God, but seeing all the people from all over the world who had travelled to Italy for the event made me realise something; Chiara was so much more. She's a role model for all of us young people who want to live our lives as a Christian well but who are confronted so much by our peers and the media. Her beatification confirms so much that, even though we may not think it but we really do have the ability to make a massive difference in the world through living out our faith fearlessly.

Later that evening we came together in the Vatican to celebrate Chiara's life and beatification. Through music, dance and drama the story of Chiara's life was told. The atmosphere was absolutely electric! Everyone in the hall listened intently to what was being said and I know certainly for myself I was so touched by some of the stories from her life. There was this one song that stayed with me, it had the lines "You only have one life to live, so live it the best you can" and I think that sums up what I took from the whole event. Chiara Luce was only on this earth for 19 years and look at the difference she made!! She never won a Nobel Prize; she wasn't rich or famous... She was just like any of us, a young person with faith in God. Learning about her life gave me the courage to try make a difference with my life, I might not change the world but even if I can change my own little corner of the world, even just change the way people think and bring some positivity...

- The real gift that Chiara Luce has given me is the ability to look for the good in everything that happens to you, even if it seems like a big disappointment or a big failing. Personally I had a big disappointment a few weeks ago. I had run in our school's elections for Head Girl. The Head Girls are 2 seniors, 6th year students, who are chosen to represent the school, chair the student council and give speeches at school events and occasions. To be honest I have always wanted to be a Head Girl, to represent my peers and to stand up in front of a crowd to give a speech. Unfortunately, this year there was tough competition. I had to sit in a massive hall as two other girls' names were called out and I didn't get it. All I could think was: 'Why not me?' 'What did I do wrong?' 'Do I not deserve it?' I had invested so much of myself into my hopes and I was so disappointed, especially as I had come so close. But I learned from Chiara Luce's example and I knew that though this wasn't what I wanted, it's obviously part of God's plan. I've really tried to love, and tried to see that behind this disappointment is really God's love for me. Now I can see how this maybe is for my own good and how that God might just have a different plan for me than what I had initially thought
- For instance, I'm part of my school choir and earlier this year we qualified for a prestigious competition; we spent so long preparing our songs, we even came in on weekends and holidays to practice. We dedicated so much to the choir and we put in so much hard work, which managed to get us all the way to the final in Northern Ireland. It was really like in the films, our teacher gave us a big inspirational speech and we were

all so focused going on stage to perform for the judges and President Michael D. Higgins on only his first week in office. The music started and every single member of the choir sang their heart out, we had never sounded so good! We were all so buzzed after it! Then the judges announced the winners, and unfortunately it wasn't us. We were all so upset, especially after all the work we had put in. The feeling lingered and our choir started to resent the winning choir and the judges, I'll admit I joined in at first. We were all angry and we felt cheated. I then realised, though that this anger wasn't going to help us get over our loss and we weren't going to be able to improve or do better work in the future if we held onto this anger. There's no point wasting what was some of the girl's last year on the choir being bitter. I tried to keep a positivity in the choir, making people laugh and look forward to all the things we'd be doing in the future. A few months later, the same choir beat us again in another competition. I was ready for the resentment to reach a whole new level but the second time we took it a little bit better, we realised that failure isn't falling down... It's not being able to get back up. Just like Chiara Luce even though she was so sick she always gave her time and her love and she never gave up. We never gave up and we kept improving. It paid off! In our last competition we finally got some first place silverware to put up in the school trophy cabinet.

I had the privilege of being in Italy for Chiara Luce's beatification.

For me, personally, the thing that strikes me so much is the fact that Chiara was such a normal teenager. I had always thought of Saints and holiness of something so distant from my own life; something in the past that wasn't really associated with the modern age especially not young people! Then I heard the story of Chiara Luce, a girl not much older than myself who was becoming a saint. I was shocked to be honest! I didn't even know that someone so young could become a saint!