

Talk with Adi Roche

The TY students of Loreto were very lucky to receive a talk from Adi Roche, an Irish anti-nuclear advocate who has inspired millions. This talk was organised with the help of Ms. Pheasey. On the 24th of February at 12 o' clock, Adi sat in front of over 100 Loreto TY students digitally. The pupils were waiting to be inspired by her powerful words and she did not disappoint.



Adi started her speech off explaining to the girls about her passion of the Earth and how she was amazed by its incredible beauty. She went on to say how we can all get overwhelmed by the negative messages and tragedies we hear on social media on the news. Every day, we hear so much despair and darkness in our daily lives and how this can lead us to feel numb and helpless to the things we hear, making us believe that there is no solution. Adi emphasised that when we feel like this, to “remember the power of the human spirit” and that we can bring greater hope to the next generation. Adi then commented on the generosity of the Irish spirit and how every Irish generation produces groups of people who have a burning passion to work with and reach out to people in need around the world.



“Our World is a living entity”, Adi stated and explained that while looking at Earth from afar, you could see no boundaries, conflict, damage, or war. She told us that this realisation had awakened her to the complexity of our planet. Adi painted a vivid picture in our minds of looking at our planet from afar in the surrounding darkness. She expressed how the rainforests and oceans were the planets lungs, getting rid of the carbon dioxide in the air. The students heard to their dismay that the oceans are now overwhelmed by carbon dioxide causing acidity, killing coral reefs, and threatening plankton. Adi asserted that

nothing else matters if we can't sustain life on the planet. "We are all worth saving", she told the students as she explained the complexities of humans, "you are all talented in your own unique way. That to me is awesome".

Adi's small giving at a young age became the greatest blessing in her life and she explained how education is so important. She stated that if you want to make a change that lasts 100 years, use education and used Mary Ward, a powerful woman ahead of her time, as an example. We as students are the implementers of education for the students behind us. We have the power to make a change because we recognise that "Earth is a beautiful grain of life in the depths of the universe" that has been put in danger by man.



Adi told the pupils that her first experience of nuclear power was in 1977. The government wanted to put in four nuclear reactors in Wexford. This frightened her as she had a very personal experience with nuclear disasters because her brother and his family were living in Pennsylvania when a nuclear tragedy struck not too long before. She thought about the future generations these reactors could destroy and how the environment could be ruined also. Adi went on to explain how she was not the only one who had this fear and that citizens across Ireland started a people's movement, keep in mind that this was a time before the internet! Adi travelled the country, warning people of what could happen to future generations if we allowed the reactors to be built. Thankfully, the government listened, and the reactors were never constructed. Adi was proud to tell us that the area they wanted to put the reactors is now a wind farm and a protected nature reserve.



Adi revealed the Chernobyl disaster to the students, a devastating explosion that occurred in reactor 4 in 1986. Radioactive material dispersed to all corners of the globe. Adi explained that the Ukrainian government tried to hide what had happened from the rest of the world, but in the end nature won. Strong winds blew the radioactive material across the continent and five days later, the nuclear waste in the air was detected by Sweden. Adi helped us to visualise the disaster that struck the world. 800,000 men were forced into the army to bring the fires under control. They had to go into the 'fires of hell' where even robots had failed. These heroes prevented the second accident from happening which would have been humanity's fate. She went on to explain how the world leaders and scientists don't know what to do with the deadly waste that was left behind. They are leaving it for future generations to deal with, while it sits there, sitting under a sealed dome that will only last for 100 years. While the nuclear material will last forever, leaving a permanent footprint on our Earth and the damage cannot be undone.



Adi revealed to the students that her personal experience with the Chernobyl disaster started when her organisation received an S.O.S appeal in 1991 from Ukrainian doctors on their new fax machine. The doctors were pleading them to help the children who had been affected by the tragedy. Adi had founded Chernobyl Children International, a non-profit organisation 1991. Her organisation provided aid to the children of Belarus, Western Russia, and Ukraine. Since then, her organisation has achieved wonders such as delivering €107 million worth of aid to impoverished communities and children across Chernobyl regions, 26,500 children have been given on rest and recuperation holidays with host families in Ireland, and much more.



Adi finished up her speech by telling the girls that “hope is like the air that we breathe, it is what sustains us and keeps us going. We need to believe in hope and to dream the dreams so we can fight for a better world. Adi expressed that although we are a small nation, we have a big heart. The people of Ireland have a ‘race memory’ of how our ancestors were oppressed and how our nation went through suffering and hardship. According to Adi, this ‘race memory’ is what drives Irish people to be so kind and generous to other nations who need our help. Adi Roche’s speech was so powerful and touched many hearts of the TY students. Anyone has the power to make a change, and in the words of Adi herself, “together we can save the world through that powerful fusion of love and hope”.

By: Lucy Fitzgerald.