



At first glance it could have been any London club night. A sense of anticipation filled the air as excited young people in their party best queued up and big security guys in black, checked tickets. Meanwhile inside, attractive women in elegant frocks greeted and registered people or took their coats. Downstairs in the basement guests drank cocktails and danced to the pulsating music and flashing lights, or sat in an impromptu restaurant chatting at small tables.

A woman then emerged from the noise and gave her hand to the burly security guard at the door. "Could you stamp my hand please? I want to go to adoration," she explained as she walked across the yard to the church for some space and quiet prayer. Catholic Fusion, which had its launch on 15th June 2013 is something of a unique event aiming to create a fusion of the social and the spiritual. Part social, part fund raiser and part evangelistic event, its aim is to create a space where young Catholics can gather to socialise and network in an exciting cutting edge club environment, without the social and moral hazards of some secular London venues.

Catholic Fusion is the brainchild of Marco Storz. The sense of purpose and professionalism of the event was striking. Marco has spent his own money to get the idea off the ground and ensure the look of the event. This included buying black shirts for all the bar staff and door men and galvanising others to contribute their talents too. Among those who volunteered their help for free were Alex Cooper, a professional chef who runs his own basement galley and underground supper club (www.basementgallery.com) and Felicity Skelton, an interior designer, who used her gifts to transform the rather shabby parish premises into a wonderland with fairy lights and a large roll of black cloth.

Part of the vision of Catholic Fusion is to encourage and build up volunteers in their specific skills too so they can use these gifts elsewhere in the Church. Marco says, "We have a trainee accountant who has set up Catholic Fusion Ltd and is doing all the book keeping; she is being mentored by a fully qualified accountant (all free of charge)". Altogether about 40 people contributed their time and gifts for the event.

"If the Church holds back from the culture, the Gospel itself falls silent. Therefore, we must be fearless in crossing the cultural threshold of the communications and information revolution now taking place"
(JPII, 2002)



The evening also has a prayer element, with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament all evening in the adjoining church and the discreet presence of a Catholic priest available for counseling and confession. Marco comments, "We believe that Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will help bring about miracles in people's lives and provide the graces necessary to make each night truly special for everyone who comes. We also believe it can help lonely people to feel loved, included and accepted as well as helping them to resist excess drinking and sexual temptation."

There was also a Catholic information zone. For this first night there were just two stalls – the Good Counsel Network (which helps pregnant women at risk of having an abortion which was one of the main beneficiaries of the fund raising aspect of the night) and Goodnews magazine.

Marco commented, "The evangelisation zone where the stalls were with the Catholic charities worked really well.

The Good Counsel Network stall had interested visitors all night long. This confirmed that the most controversial area of Catholic Fusion – ie having an evangelisation area in a club environment can actually work if it is well presented and integrated with everything else." The prayer side also went well and Marco commented, "At one point I counted almost 10 people in Adoration, both volunteers and guests. It is wonderful to see Jesus being there with us as the back bone of Catholic Fusion – all praise to him for making this event a success." Marco says his inspiration was Pope John Paul II's 2002 speech to

Catholics to find new ways of making the gospel accessible to the new generations.

"If the Church holds back from the culture, the Gospel itself falls silent. Therefore, we must be fearless in crossing the cultural threshold of the communications and information revolution now taking place. Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure which marked other great periods of change." (JP II, 2002)

Marco estimates about 250 guests attended the evening which he hopes will become a regular event. The feedback from the Augustinians who run the parish has been good, and although Fr Stefan Parks, who supported them initially has now moved, it seems the new parish priest is happy for the event to continue. **The next Catholic Fusion is planned for the end of September. For further information see their web site www.catholicfusion.org**