

CATHAL GAVIN

Mayo boy with special singing gift



By Catherine Gilmartin

I had the pleasure of meeting a very special boy and his mother this

month. 16 year old Swinford native, Cathal Gavin, who was chosen to sing live at World Youth Day in Panama, Central America, in January this year. This interview touches on what God means to this gifted boy and how lucky he feels to be from Mayo.

World Youth Day is an amazing live event attended by over four million people for week-long concerts. This year's attendance included various dignitaries including the much loved Pope Francis, and was broadcast all over the world. It is organised for young people by the Catholic Church every three years in a different country. As you can imagine there was very stiff competition from hundreds of hopefuls all over the world - the last Irish person to sing at World Youth Day was Liam Lawton in Toronto in 2002 and the first was Dana in 1997. Cathal says: "It was a great honour and privilege to represent not only my county, but my country and to be only the third Irish person ever to do so."

Cathal was also joined on stage by renowned soprano and Ballina native, Donna Malone.

At the end of his performance on the main stage in Panama, completely out of the blue, Cathal was asked what God meant to him. Cathal says: "I was in shock - I wasn't expecting any questions and this was in front of an audience of 250,000 youth". However I just stayed connected to myself and answered: "God is a friend - you don't have to go there all the time, but if you need help just ask Him".

His mother Ann says: "I was watching it on the television



Cathal pictured with Donna Malone and others who performed at World Youth Day in Panama.

and thought how is he going to answer this? It's very hard for a 16 year old boy to answer a question in front of such a crowd... but when he answered and the interpreter translated what Cathal had said to the audience, the ripple effect was amazing - the crowd literally went wild."

Cathal has always been a very spiritual person, and comes from a very close and supportive family. His granny always told him if you are ever in need - talk to God and he will help you. Cathal, like his mother, believes in angels and before he sings at any event his mother always asks if he has connected with them and God. Cathal says it really helps him before he performs.

When Cathal returned from Panama he said: "Mum, I

want to do more of this - I want to do more stage work. It's the best feeling ever stepping on a stage which is the size of a cruise ship. There were 3 tiers to the stage, the dancers were on the first tier, the guest singers on the second tier and Pope Francis on the 3rd tier."

Cathal is such an unusual 16 year old - he must be full of confidence to do what he does; but it certainly has not gone to his head. He is so unassuming, humble and has such a lovely way with him.

Ann is Cathal's manager: "I

am the mammy and the manager - as my colleagues and friends call me!!" However, being the manager didn't wash with the tight security in Panama. Cathal says: "Even my mother wasn't allowed in with me backstage! She was turned away and had to go back to the hotel and watch me on TV; there were armed police everywhere and it was very scary."

It sounds unbelievable but Cathal's mother says she had no idea Cathal could sing when he was growing up.



Cathal singing at World Youth Day Concert in Panama

