

BEHIND THE WIRE

Introduction

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character” - Martin Luther King Jr.

One of the biggest problems facing refugees at the moment is what is outlined in this quote. Human being will always be afraid of the unknown and the things that they do not understand. The acceptance of them, their cultures, their backgrounds, their ideals must be made true if refugees are to truly have a place in society. There was an experience that me and my fellow classmates had, here at St Joseph's Nudgee College, that helped us to understand that and many other problems facing refugees: the 'Behind the Wire' Immersion.

On the immersion, we learnt about refugees, the problems facing them and the incidence of refugees here in Australia. The immersion was over four days where we experienced what it was like to be a refugee. The first day we had a general background analysis and what really is a refugee. The second day we went to Milpera State School, an Australian school designed for refugees who have just arrived from foreign countries and need an education in order to live out their new lives here. The third day we went to an Eritrean restaurant named Muooz. This restaurant is built for female Eritrean refugees who need an occupation in Australia. This allows them to work here in Australia, but still keep their culture and traditions intact.

On the final day we went Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary with the Milpera students and showed them the wildlife of Australia. This helped them to fit in with our culture and showed them our traditions as well.

Overall, this immersion was a good, solid experience on the topic of refugees and we all enjoyed are time on it.



THE CHURCH'S VIEW

The Catholic Social Teachings

The Church has many social teachings related to refugees. However, in this article, I would only like to focus on two: Human Dignity and Solidarity. These two are the two articles that I believe are the most relevant to refugees and the problems facing them.



We're all on this together.



Human Dignity

This social teaching deals with one of the main problems with refugees: their rights as human beings. This teaching discusses that all human life is sacred and each human being has a right to normal life. This deals with two characteristics of refugees: the prosecution that forces them to flee their countries and below average conditions for humans, especially those seeking asylum. War and terror should not be what any human being has to go through, no matter their culture or social background.

Solidarity

This one is especially important to refugees, and relates heavily to the problem I mentioned in the beginning: acceptance of refugees. This social teaching discusses that all human beings are brothers and sisters and that we should treat everyone as a global family, no matter what their nationality, culture, race or values may be. Love thy neighbour as you love yourself should not be put between local relationships but through an international scope.

TOUCHSTONES

These are the two touchstones I believe are relevant to refugees.

As Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition, we aspire to be faithful to these four touchstones.

Inclusive Community

Our community is accepting and welcoming, fostering right relationships and committed to the common good.

Justice and Solidarity

We are committed to justice and peace for all, grounded in a spirituality of action and reflection that calls us to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised and the Earth itself.

Reflection

In this section of the article, I will discuss each day of the immersion and what it meant for us as followers of Edmund Rice and Signs of Faith.



Day 1 - Background of Refugees

The first day we learnt about what a refugee is, and what would be the problems/causes that would force people to flee their country in search of safety. Pure and simple, what we learnt from that day was what a refugee was and what it meant to be a refugee.

Day 2 - Milpera State School

On the second day, we went to Milpera state school and actually met refugees and learned about their personal stories, where they came from and what forced them to flee their country. That day, we learned we should seek out and help the poor and the marginalised, or those who have been persecuted for their skin colour or religion or culture etc. as followers of Edmund Rice



Day 3 - Mu'ooz Restaurant

The third day, we visited Mu'ooz restaurant. We ate many Eritrean foods, all of them delicious, however there were also many traditions of the Eritrean people built into the way of eating the meal. That day we learnt that all refugees should have the same career options as Australians and we should try to integrate foreign cultures into our culture as well.

Day 4 - Lone Pine Sanctuary

The final day we went to Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary where we experienced Australian wildlife with the students from Milpera. We showed them the various parts of Australian culture and our traditions. We learned that we should try to show other people our culture as well.

Action

This section of the article will outline how you can take action against the refugee problem.



Donate to a social justice organisation

There are many social just organisations out there that you can donate to and in order to help against the refugee problem.



Join a refugee movement

You can join several refugee movements all over the world or join several refugee programs set up by social justice organisations like Caritas.



Participate at Nudgee

As followers of Edmund Rice, we must take it upon ourselves to do what is just and to aspire to be a Sign of Faith. Participate in social justice programs like 'Big Brekkie' and the immersion itself in order to help those who are marginalised by society.