

# The Philippines Immersion

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INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY



## HOW CAN WE HELP?

Each year through the annual Walk to the Philippines fundraiser, the Nudgee community not only builds greater awareness for these people's struggles but we directly help those in need as a result. In 2013 we are called to 'Be the Difference', to be a catalyst, a frontrunner and a leader within the world – it is through little things such as fundraising for the Walk to the Philippines and participating in the Justice league that we **can** be the difference, and slowly change the world as a result.

## The Pag-Inupdanay Experience

We all aspire to become a 'Sign of Faith' to the world, a leader for the people, an advocate for those who are disadvantaged, and an **active** member of our global community. It is through the Edmund Rice Tradition that Justice and Solidarity is a concept which has been, is and forever will be an important part of our Nudgee community and Immersion experience. Behind the immersion program lays key ideology which contradicts social discrimination, persecution and inequality, instilled by an effort to create an Inclusive community, one which unites the world through Gospel Spirituality.

*"A dream is your creative vision for your life in the future. You must break out of your current comfort zone and become comfortable with the unfamiliar and the unknown."* – Denis Waitley, an American Motivational Author.

Intertwined throughout our daily lives, our Australian culture, our attitude, is the feeling of safety, of security and the promise of a future full of opportunities for all. Prior to my Pag-Inupdanay immersion experience, I rarely contemplated this fact, and failed to value how blessed I was to be in my particular position. Likewise, my time in the Philippines revitalised the importance of faith, happiness, family and love throughout my life. Yet the Philippines immersion was not just a cultural and social awakening exercise, nor one to help those who are in need, but a completely life-changing experience – one which will remain with me forever.



GOSPEL SPIRITUALITY

## A LIFE LONG MEMORY

As I entered into this small hut, nestled in the salty sand dunes of the small town of Cauayan, I discovered the precise people which define the Filipino culture. This elderly woman, whom I referred to as 'Lola' (meaning grandmother) definitely questioned my beliefs and sense of community and resilience.

Born into a household whereby she was unable to attend school, her future was ultimately predestined to be imbedded within poverty. As a consequence of Lola's childhood limitations, she has directly suffered the brutal effects no person should ever endure – a victim of domestic violence and sexual abuse, malnourished throughout her life, forced to constantly move houses and abandoned by her very own family - all the while being completely blind. She now lives with just her 9 year old Granddaughter who is attending St Columban's Academy Cauayan – an integral member of the annual Philippines immersion,



in a house built by the local tribe after their previous home was turned to ashes by vandals.

**They struggle, but they still survive and always search for a better quality of life. Lola, and her local community have succeeded in getting her Granddaughter into school, so that she can break the cycle. Because the children are their future, and it is the future whereby hope, opportunity and a lifestyle free from poverty exists.**

## A LIFE LONG LESSON

A message of solidarity is core to the teachings of Luke's Gospel, and it is through our immersion that we all hope to live out this belief and to promote solidarity to those who are disadvantaged, and give back to the worldwide community. A common idea which resonated in my head throughout the Pag-Inupdanay immersion, one which is certainly apparent in Luke's Gospel is the notion, *"Do to others as you would have them do to you"* Luke 6: 27-38.

**Seeing children vomiting on their own doorstep, people not even having a toilet, sewerage or a clean source of water and hearing the stories of people who have faced such inhumane things throughout their lives, contextualised with my experiences of their profound spirituality, their charisma for learning and their community spirit really questioned why these people, why our brothers and sisters are being left behind. These vast dissimilarities, these contradictory experiences fuels my drive and passion for helping them, and decreasing the ever so great distance between countries across the globe. After all, they will forever stand in solidarity with us and the world– it is now our turn to show Pag-Inupdanay, TOGETHERNESS.**



JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY



LIBERATING EDUCATION