



Robert Fang, Aug 23 2012

*"The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer."* Mahatma Gandhi

For the duration of the past week, a selection of Year 10 boys from St Joseph's Nudgee College embarked upon the 'Homelessness in Brisbane' Immersion. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity for them that was to become the one of the most memorable weeks of both their time at Nudgee College and their life to come. Some highlights of the week included visits to the Brisbane Youth Service and the 139 Club. These similar 'drop-in' centres offered shelter, food, protection, and company to those on the streets. A Catholic Social Teaching, Life and Dignity of the Human Person, states that all human beings are created in the image of God regardless of their ethnicity, gender, nation, economic status, or social status. What these 'drop-in' centres are doing is providing what the homeless lack - in other words, helping to restore a measure of their dignity - and acting in likeness with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

It was apparent to the boys during their immersion experience that the ideology of social justice was being violated. Every day, over 2500 people with the majority being youths are roaming the streets of Brisbane devoid of conventional accommodation; forced to reside in parks or derelict buildings. Many act yet many do not and are content to prosper while fellow human beings' dignity is vulnerable. All human beings are created in the image of God, so we are not only shaming the homeless but shaming the image of God by sitting idly while there are others who are desperate. There are four touchstones in place at Nudgee College - Justice & Solidarity, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, and Liberating Education. These touchstones were the main reason as to why the students embarked upon this immersion. The students who elected to go to this immersion were challenged to take upon the touchstone of Justice & Solidarity, and truly aid the poor and marginalised. The third day was an eye-opener that allowed the group of nine teenage boys an insight into what it was like to be homeless. They for the first time truly understood how fortunate they were as middle to upper class young men with literally nearly everything they want

*"Love is not patronizing and charity isn't about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same - with charity you give love, so don't just give money but reach out your hand instead."* Mother Teresa



and need while there are children as young as 10 on the streets with little to no possessions.

At the conclusion of this immersion experience, every single attendant had brought away with them life lessons which in some cases changed their view of the poor and marginalised entirely. **A Nudgee College student who wants to remain anonymous stated, "Before I went on this immersion, I used to avoid homeless people because I thought that they were 'bludgers' who had put themselves in their current situation. However, I now know that behind every homeless person, there is a story usually related to family violence. The homeless then turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with life and as a result, become homeless. My perspective of the homeless has now changed completely and I am no longer judgemental."**

For those who are interested to commit themselves to aiding the less fortunate and acting in likeness with the Parable of the Good Samaritan, there is an abundance of opportunity available. The dedicated worker from the wider community can volunteer to work in the 139 Club, Brisbane Youth Service, or St. Vincent

De Paul amongst others. These organizations strive to give something back to the disadvantaged but they rely solely on the contributions of volunteers. For students at Nudgee College, there is the Homework Help club, Big Barbecue, and Big Breakfast. You can opt to give up perhaps an hour of your week and do something charitable for the community. Volunteer work can be tedious but can also be rewarding giving the volunteer a feeling of satisfaction that he or she has helped someone in need.