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Connecting Kids

- STRIVING TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY
THROUGH THE SOCIAL CATHOLIC TEACHINGS -

BY: VIET TRAN

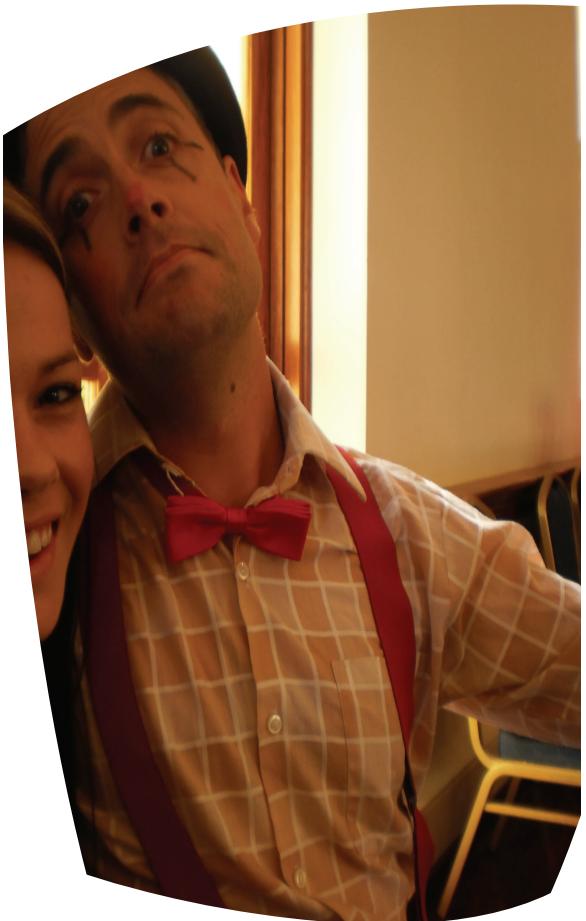
Year 10 - Immersion Program

Throughout the duration of the immersion week, a selection of fifteen grade 10, St Joseph's Nudgee College boys embarked upon a life changing experience, through the Kids Connecting immersion program. This chance in a lifetime experience was seized through the schools social justice program which was aimed to solely give back to the community; in this case by changing the lives of disadvantaged children. Offered only to the year ten students, the Kids Connecting program proved to be one of the most memorable weeks of both the boys' time at Nudgee College and their life to come.

The boys began their social justice journey in the familiarised sacred

grounds of Nudgee College. With the first day as a debrief, the boys were prepared and provided with an insight in the lives of disadvantaged kids they might face in the following days through the TV series "Oasis".

Statistics showed that a staggering 5,381 youth, from the age of 12 - 18 years, located in Queensland Australia were left homeless or neglected; it was clearly evident that the ideology of social justice was being violated. Through this, the boys gained an immediate realisation that these kids they would meet in a few days could possibly end up on the streets homeless, in constant drug use, or even dead simply by a wrong path they ventured.



STUDENT REFLECTION

To be honest, at first I was quite anxious about these kids. I didn't know what background they would have come from or how they would react towards me. However I was also anxious to know how I could make his/her life better. When we finally met them, it was the realisation that they were just ordinary kids that shocked me. Throughout the week I began to grow a bond with these fun filled, friendly fiends and before long I was wishing the experience lasted longer! - Viet Tran



Social Teachings and the Four Touch Stones

*"Only a life lived for others, is a life worthwhile".
- Albert Einstein.*

Through the social catholic teaching "Options for the Poor and Vulnerable", the boys opt to change this and created an opportunity for these kids to laugh, express themselves and for a week become carefree children again.

With minimal time with the kids, the boys ensured their time at Nudgee was one to remember. Through drama and comedy workshops, the boys built bonds with their partners and allowed them to express their feelings and stories. To all fifteen of the boys, it was an awakening to the fact that they finally realized how fortunate they were as middle to upper class young men with almost everything they could want or need whereas for some of these children, going to sleep without a meal was a casual case.

Touched by this, the fifteen Nudgee boys took action and spoiled their buddies rotten with casual visits to the tuckshop as well as the provided meals. They had made it an obligation to treat these kids with the utmost respect for these children were not only disadvantaged but in need and as all humans are created in the image of God, by sitting idle would not only mean shaming the disadvantaged but shaming the image of God.

In conclusion the course of this spiritual journey, led the Nudgee boys in encountering the 4 Touchstones

of the Edmund Rice Tradition.

These touchstones - Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community and Justice & Solidarity, were the key themes explored throughout this immersion. The boys were challenged to answer the social justice call and focus on these themes whilst spending time with the Zillmere State School Kids.

By simply accepting these kids and opening our hearts

"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed".

LUKE 14:12-14

and minds whilst providing them with quality education the Nudgee Boys followed through on the Justice touch stones and in all answered the Social Justice call.

They acted in likeness of Luke's parable, as they had aided for the disadvantaged whilst striving for peace, justice and solidarity.

Furthermore, the experiences and life lessons gained from this immersion, varying from not taking things for granted, to cherishing relationships, belongings and spirituality had left all fifteen Nudgee men shining true in the image of God.

NUDGE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

For the dedicated and willing, the journey in aiding the less fortunate did not have to end here. As portrayed through the parable of the "Good Samaritan" there is an abundance of opportunity available. Options ranging from:

1. Helping out at Zillmere Homework club.
2. Helping out at Nudgee's Big Barbecue Program
3. Donating unwanted clothes or items to Red Shield Appeal / Salvation Army.
4. Part taking in further programs with the students via immersion like programs.

Work can be tedious and tiring however by opting out and giving back to the community through charity, the sense of satisfaction gained is definitely worthwhile!



- Year 10 Nudgee boys & Zillmere Primary Students -