

Reflection on Catholic Heart in North Haledon: July 22-27, 2018

Just 2 weeks ago I had my first experience of “Catholic Heart Work Camp” (CHWC). Ten different parishes with about 230 students were part of North Haledon week. We were up in North Jersey just outside of Patterson. In the first place, I want to express my gratitude to all that made this week possible for the youth of MMR and for me. I’m thankful for the chaperones that stayed for all or part of the week. I’m immensely grateful to all those who made financial donations to CHWC.

The urban landscape of North Jersey has more than its fair share of poverty. Many of these areas have more work to do than they have people to do it. CHWC partners with local Catholic Charities and social services to place the students where the work needs to be done. Students from MMR parish went to different work sites throughout the area to do whatever that organization needed. Many students painted. Others worked with “Habitat for Humanity”. Still others staffed local food banks and soup kitchens. Many site supervisors testified that the students made a positive impact. They did things for them that could not have been done otherwise.

The week is not all about work. It is a growth experience for many students. There seemed to be a balance of work, prayer and play during the entire week. As the chaplain for the camp, I had the good fortune of working with the staff from CHWC. There was some serious prayer time as well as time for fun. We got to experience multiple dance parties, praise and worship music, and a dynamic duo called the “Carpenter Commandos”. All of these things were geared toward growing community.

Many students experienced Eucharistic Adoration for the first time. After the dance party one evening, the gymnasium that we were using was transformed into a place of encounter for prayer. We had a short procession with the Blessed Sacrament while the gymnasium was transformed. This time of adoration was truly special. No one was required to stay but almost all did stay. I believe many of the students truly encountered the love of Jesus that night.

This week really made me appreciate the beauty of the Catholic faith. There is nothing quite like young people excited to serve and to pray. I was truly edified by all the students from the ten parishes that participated and in particular the 28 students from MMR. The CHWC staff was very complimentary about the students from our group. The credit for that really belongs to the parents and the families of this excellent group.

Stay tuned for details about next summer’s CHWC. Please keep an eye out for Youth Group events here at MMR in the coming months.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Muka

