

Gospel Roads Tampa

Fr. Steve Ryan, SDB

It's hard to imagine a better facility to run Gospel Roads for a large group of teenagers than Mary Help of Christians Center in Tampa; 60 participants, 8 young team members, 3 co-directors and 4 adult chaperones experienced an amazing week. The community, led by Fr. Denis Donovan and Fr. Paul Chuong were most hospitable to the 75 of us who took part in the program from June 27-July 3. The Salesian Cooperators of Tampa joined us for a final Mass and treated us to a barbecue at the end of the program.

On Sunday, June 27, the group met and began to bond. Many of the participants (a majority were from St. Petersburg Catholic) started to shed their defenses and opened up to Jesus and prepared themselves for service. Each day one-third of the group served at homeless food pantries and shelters for the poor. One-third worked on fixing up houses and doing manual work, and one-third worked as assistants at Mary Help of Christians summer camp. The names of the groups were: Vicuna, Savio and Rua. Each night they processed the service that they did. Rudy Gomez, who will be a Domestic Volunteer in Chicago next year, did a nice job of organizing the schedule. Steve McEntegart, CYM at SPC, did a great job on social justice teachings and reflections on the service of a Christian Disciple.

The sojourners of GR Tampa were kept busy but were also pushed to grow spiritually as disciples and missionaries. The turning point of the week was Wednesday when we experienced a beautiful Eucharistic adoration and celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation. Our SDBs from the St. Philip Residence were more than happy to lend a hand for confession even though we finished late in the night.

Bros. Bob Metell and Rob Malusa should certainly be given credit for their beautiful style of Salesian accompaniment of the young.

Being a lover of camp and a product of Camp Don Bosco, I personally couldn't have been happier spending the week with the kids at the camp at Mary Help. The catechetical sessions and the weekly Mass for campers were aided nicely by the Gospel Roads youths. Each shared his or her gifts nicely.

Next year we will give it another go as the momentum is truly there, and more young people in the province desire to be Salesian disciples and missionaries. The Gospel Roads Program is a good formation program for them.

[home](#)