



CATHOLIC CHURCH | SEWARD, NEBRASKA



Love One Another....

BY: JEREMY AND TESS SOUSEK

It's one thing to feed, clothe, and shelter the homeless. It's quite another to love them.

This is the lesson we learned in early June when we took five of our GodTeens, along with Monsignor Tucker, on a mission trip to Denver with the organization Christ in the City (CIC).

Christ in the City is a ministry of encounter. They seek to know, love, and serve (in that order) those who are homeless - their "friends on the streets". While they provide food, clothing, and services to homeless in the Denver area, their main goal is to build relationships with them, because it is usually broken relationships that lead people to the streets in the first place.



Godteens Involved in this Mission Trip:

Michael Peery
Justin Matulka
Myka Smith
Faith Winkelmann
Desirae Hibbert



Dr. Jonathan Reyes, founder of CIC, describes it like this:

“[Encounter is] a real kind of connection with someone, a sort of sharing of humanity. It doesn’t have to be long, but an encounter is when you’re actually looking into someone’s eyes and saying, ‘I see you, and I’m actually listening to you.’”

For us and our high schoolers, watching the missionaries at CIC encounter the homeless and each other was one of the most fulfilling parts of the trip. Sure, we did things like package food, sort donations, and feed lunch to people in need, but I think we would all agree that the most impactful experience was learning to encounter the homeless like Jesus would.

“...an encounter is when you’re actually looking into someone’s eyes and saying, ‘I see you, and I’m actually listening to you.’”

Dr. Jonathan Reyes

One of our teens, Justin, said “I think that realizing the fact that these people, while they need the physical necessities such as food, they are still people and people need relationships just as much as other things.”

“Definitely talking to people about their stories... seeing people that lived lives just like us in those situations,” Myka said. “I was amazed with the variety of good health and bad health, druggies and people that are trying. The fluctuation in motivation from person to person to recover was not what I expected.”

One of the missionaries at CIC, Ben, took us on a street tour and pointed out things like “hostile architecture” - bars across benches to prevent people from laying down, large landscaping rocks placed under bridges (and only underneath) to prevent the same thing, gates and pins on rafters to keep out not only the birds, but the people...

“If you were homeless, and you saw those,” he said, pointing to the bird spikes, “and thought ‘those are meant to keep the birds out’, then looked the other way and saw the grates and thought ‘those are to keep me out’, how would you feel?”



He took us underneath a certain bridge where, if you looked closely at the rafters over the river, you could see a mattress precariously positioned.

“Think about how desperate someone had to be, for that to be their best option,” he said.

Ben taught us about various signs, showed us a culvert full of graffiti, pointed out different objects and perhaps the reasons behind them. Eventually, he took us through the weeds next to a beautiful, busy park, where we saw several encampments - literally meters away from a world who had no idea they existed.

“Seeing the abundance of homeless people and how close they were to a busy city park kinda flipped my perspective and made me think about things differently,” Justin said.

“Walking the streets and “hunting for a spot to live” really showed me how lucky we are!” said Myka.

“Yeah, definitely walking the streets!” Des said.

Faith said, “The things that impacted me the most was the street walk and seeing it through someone else’s eyes and taking a new perspective of the things around me.”

“I’d like to come back when I can actually talk with more people,” Michael said.

And this is the mark of a real mission trip - thinking that we’re going out there to serve others and change some part of the world, and coming home with the realization that we are the ones who have been changed. The work we did feels very small compared to the stories we heard and the heartbreaking situations we witnessed.

I think what hit me the most, though, was the fact that we’re really not so different from our new friends on the street. We all crave connection, we all desire to be known and loved, and to grow in relationship with God and one another. St. Vincent de Paul should be our spiritual home, one where nobody is homeless.

In some sense, it’s easy to provide material things to those who have nothing - it’s much more difficult to truly love and encounter those around us, whether it be our families, our coworkers, our neighbors, or our classmates who drive us crazy...

As we begin this new school year, let us all work to see each other, to learn new names and faces, and to build relationships so that St. Vincent’s may be a spiritual home for all, just as we are meant to be.



Ways to Encounter the Homeless

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- Ask their name, and tell them yours.
- Keep useful items, like socks, soft granola bars, and gift cards, in your car to give out instead of cash (suggestions from Jeremy).
- Volunteer in the community and/or with the St. Vincent de Paul society.
- Keep those you meet on the street in your prayers.

Ways to Encounter Others at St. Vincent's

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- Ask their name, and tell them yours.
- Invite newcomers to sit with you at Mass or attend a ministry together.
- Be unafraid to invite people into your home.
- Stick around after Sunday Mass to visit with friends or make new ones.
- Keep those you meet at St. Vincents in your prayers.

For more information on future Christ in the City Mission Trips, or how you can help, please contact Tess and Jeremy Sousek via email at tess.sousek@gmail.com, or Monsignor Tucker (402) 643-3421 or msgr.robert-tucker@cdolinc.net.

St. Vincent de Paul Liturgy Schedule

DAILY MASSES: MONDAY THRU FRIDAY AT 7:00 AM, SATURDAY AT 8:00 AM

SUNDAY OBLIGATION MASSES: SATURDAY AT 5:30 PM, SUNDAY AT 8:00 AM AND 10:00 AM

CONFESSION: MONDAY THRU SATURDAY: 20 MINUTES BEFORE EACH DAILY MASS, SATURDAY: 4:30 TO 5:20 PM
SUNDAY: 7:30 TO 7:50 AM AND 9:30 TO 9:50 AM. OTHER CONFESSION TIMES AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT.