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Among Teens

School is closed till next year. This is most certainly the longest holiday ever for my students. It has also been an opportunity to look back...

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Speaking to one of the chaplains, he opined that amid all the extra events and initiatives going on in Strathmore School, the the activities that are perhaps doing the most for people are the parenting courses and the father-son clubs.

One other initiative has been among the students. We begun in the School a programme that includes talks on human virtues for senior school students. The programme targets boys who for whatever reason do not attend means of formation offered at the well-known Hodari Boys Club up the road. Most of them have come from the soccer team I was coaching and have proved really amazing!

The basic plan consists of a 15 minute fortnightly talk, and a personal chat in the week when there is no talk.

Following an off-the-cuff suggestion from a friend, the talks rely on Powerpoint presentations for these image-inclined teens. The boys really like the pictures and the juicy quotes from all sorts of historical characters. When the projector is unavailable, we resort to talks in the traditional format.

The talks with the strongest impact were on fraternity, mortification, apostolate and purity.

As with the majority of teenagers today, and with internet, DVDs, DSTv etc., purity is a rather sticky issue. I copy below some lines from a 16 year-old:

Before I joined the talk I never used to pray as much as I do now. My devotion to our Lord is now greater than before. I used to focus my life on academic excellence, neglecting the spiritual as well as the sports aspect. Now I am able, or at least try, to balance the three aspects.

I have learnt to be patient with everyone through mortifications for them. I now believe that no one can 'get on my nerves' but instead give me a chance to sanctify myself as St. Josemaría taught. Through the chat I am able to increase my efforts to improve physically, mentally and

spiritually. Also, I have learnt to be sincere.

Earlier on I only cared about myself, my needs and my problems. Now I care about fraternity with my brothers in the talk. Though faced with frequent sexual desires I am able not to consent albeit with difficulty.

All in all, the talks have changed every part of me by encouraging me to pursue self-excellence.

A 15 year-old writes:

Before joining these talks, I was part of a crowd that always believed in lust at first sight.

Soon after joining, especially after the talk on purity, I began to question my thoughts and actions and how they ranked on the morality scale. Eventually, thoughts and actions became less immoral especially after

considering how some saints would try by extreme means to avoid such thoughts e.g. Saint Francis of Assisi rolling in the snow or Saint Benedict plunging into a bramble.

Little by little, I began to rid myself of such temptations and although most of the times it's a struggle, I try my best and often ask God: "If you want, you can make me clean" *and he does make me clean.*

MW

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