

Teen boys and happiness!

Towards the end of 2022, a group of dads to teenage boys met on a Saturday after attending a recollection at Bugala Study Centre in Kampala. The question they set themselves to answer was “What can we do jointly to help our sons grow into men of virtue?” Our answer was a dads-run club for teenage boys.

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When the issue of naming the boys' club came up, several options were discussed, but in the end, most of the fathers wanted the club to be called "Heri Club". "Heri" means "happiness" in Swahili. And we certainly wished this solid, virtuous happiness for our sons!

Our next challenge was figuring out what activities Heri Club could organise for the teenage boys to help them along the paths of virtue and happiness (which we were keen not to confuse with simple entertainment). What activities would nudge these young men towards being generous in all spheres of life?

St. Josemaria, the founder of Opus Dei, already had a suggestion that we recalled from the formation we received as dads: take the young boys to visit the poor. In so doing, the boys help the poor but at the same time

learn from their poverty and hardships.

And so it was, that when the dads started making a list of Heri Club monthly activities for the year 2023, the list comprised a visit to the poor in Katanga Slum which is a ten minutes walk from Bugala; a visit to the children's cancer ward in Uganda Cancer Institute, Mulago Hospital, which is also a ten minutes walk from Bugala. Other activities populating the list included sporting activities like football and swimming, an overnight camp, and an excursion to Mabira Forest.

One of the Heri Club teenage boys who visited Katanga Slum was amazed at the poor housing and sanitation people there lived in. “Dad, did you notice the trench of waste water that was just at the entrances of most of the tiny houses?” asked the boy. And his dad

responded in the affirmative, taking the chance to encourage the young man to whisper a thanks to God for the blessings that He grants to those He wills.

During the visit to the cancer ward, one of the boys wondered, “Will these children recover and return home well?” One of the dads replied saying we could not be sure, but that we should pray for the best physical and spiritual outcome.

The Heri Club dads are pushing on with the activities. In January 2024, during a father-son overnight camp, the boys were involved in making the schedule of activities for the club for 2024. Already, in March 2024, we visited another slum - Makerere-Kivulu Slum. And we have some fun activities on the list like a father-son barbecue which will even help the fathers strengthen their friendships with their sons.

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