

# **St. Valentine's celebration with the disabled of Mother Teresa**

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When I heard the time of departure (7.30 a.m.) on Saturday 14th

February I was wondering how many students will actually be at the University car park at that time ready to depart. Community Service Centre (CSC), members had been invited to the Missionaries of Charity house in Langata. We had not been invited for a St. Valentine's breakfast, as some people may think, but to give a hand with the chores and help to take care of 54 women (aged between 14 and late 50s) who have different degrees of mental and physical disability.

The sister in charge who had invited us was actually quite surprised when she was told that the 40 Strathmore students had arrived at 8 a.m. as she had requested. Students were immediately divided into groups and assigned to the different chores. Some men were sanding metallic beds as they prepared them for a new coat of paint. Some ladies were assigned to the kitchen to prepare

the meal for the day. Others were sweeping the yards while another group washed the windows and clothes. All this work continued until 11am with very few interruptions.

We then took a break to feed the residents who were seated in a central courtyard where we joined them. The process was a bit slow and cumbersome, at least until you got a bit of confidence. In a way feeding one of these ladies is similar to feeding a small child.

We learnt that most of these ladies lived in this home because they had nobody to look after them. Some ladies were abandoned when they were very young while others were slightly older. We were informed that this happens when families felt they were not able to take care of people with the kind of disability they had.

Students were very happy to be part of this noble initiative. When I asked

some how it felt celebrating valentines in such a way: One told me that it was her best St. Valentine, as it was only today that she had discovered these little angels. Another one told me that she was very happy as such a visit made her heart grow bigger, i.e. your capacity to love grows. Another student told me that they learnt to appreciate the simple things in life, such as the ability to sit and feed oneself.

What did I learn myself? I learnt to trust in Divine Providence. We were told that for the 29 years the house has been in existence they have never lacked food, yet they do not receive any help from the Government. They just trust that God will provide for them and He always has.

I also realized that these women who from a purely physical point of view may not be called beautiful, are

really beautiful inside because of their innocence, their purity and their goodness. It is us, who are reasonably normal by the world's standards that are not so beautiful inside. First, we should be very grateful to God for all he has given us, but very often we take our normal gifts and abilities for granted. We keep complaining about what he has not given us or has taken away from us.

The home accepts volunteers, therefore students looking for where to do their community attachment can start here. Visitors are welcome to visit as often as they feel led to do it.

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