A Worthwhile Summer in Ronda

University students from different youth study centers of Opus Dei in the country did volunteer social work to help a fishing community in the municipality of Ronda in Cebu.

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When summer comes, this is the foremost thing that I always look forward to: joining a community outreach activity called **Work Camp**. Last year I attended one in my home place Davao. This year I had it in

magnificent Cebu. It ran for 9-days – too short for a piece of heaven but worth several years of acquiring wisdom. There I was able to do things I've never done before, meet interesting people, learn how to give myself and become more aware of our seas and the environmental issues that concern it.

The Work Camp aimed to help a fishing community around Kasadya Aqua Park in the municipality of Ronda in Cebu. The major activities we had were fish-cage building, mangrove planting, and giving Catholic catechism and tutorials in Math and English to the grade school children in the community. University students from different youth study centers in the country volunteered to give themselves for this undertaking. Sugbu Study Center (the organizer) and Buklod Study Center had 3 volunteers each. There were 22 volunteers from Manila – 14

from Ateneo, 7 from UP-Diliman and 1 from UST represented by Lauan, Kapuluan and Sarangani study centers respectively. This work camp has even reached an international scope with the inclusion of an Australian civil engineer, Andrew Baré, who came all the way from Sydney to join us.

Our priority project - the making of two fish-cages - was finished in just about 4 days because of the total team effort of the group. A fish cage was to be made of several nets stitched together with nylon wire. It measured 4 x 4 x 2.5 m, framed with bamboo poles attached with empty plastic containers as floaters on its sides and corners. It was designed to stay afloat and serve as fish nursery set out in the sea instead of making an inland fish pond which costs a lot. For fishermen, this is also an illustrious solution to the ever-decreasing fish catch in the open sea.

For us to be more informed of the dangers that already hound our seas and oceans, well-recognized speakers went to visit the camp and explained to us what mangroves are and their importance to the water ecosystems which we greatly depend on. They said that the youth, like us, should take an active part in conserving our precious aquatic resources. For our practical aid on this matter, we planted mangrove seedlings at the mangrove sanctuary inside the camp site.

To relax ourselves from the daily work, we also had sports and leisure time late in the afternoon every day. We played almost all games - basketball, volleyball, soccer, water polo, and the new "Ultimate Frisbee". After our sumptuous lunch and dinner meals, we had what we call "get-togethers" where we try to know more about each other as we were from different universities and

cultures. We shared what our own study centers were all about. One highlight of our work camp was our excursion trip to Moalboal, a town with very superb beaches. We went swimming and snorkeling, played some beach sports, and most importantly, enjoyed the fun and friendship we had together.

This experience has not only enhanced our social and civic responsiveness, but it has also strengthened our spirituality and virtuosity. In everything that we had to do, we asked for God's guidance through prayer and meditation. It was not difficult to realize how blessed we were because nature's wonder was right before our eyes. The beautiful and peaceful environment plus the warm and accommodating people in Kasadya also made this whole experience one we would never forget.

The Work Camp is a joint undertaking of Rotary Club of Manduae North and Cebu Fuente, Kasadya Aqua Park and several donors of Sri-Visayan Foundation.

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