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Generosity begets joy in outreach to the blind

Women friends, students, teachers and staff of Linang Center and Punlaan School visited the Philippine National School for the Blind in Pasay City.

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"To be happy, what you need is not a comfortable life but a heart which is in love." (St. Josemaría Escrivá, Furrow, no. 795)

Msgr. Fernando Ocariz, the Prelate of Opus Dei, reminded Jennifer of those words of St. Josemaría, replying to her question on how to foster greater generosity towards the needy during the general audience at the MOA Arena in Pasay City, Philippines last July 30.

Jennifer related her recent visit to Philippine National School for the Blind (PNSB) in Pasay City together with 40 friends, teachers, staff and youth contacts of the Linang Center and Punlaan School in Quezon City and the City of San Juan, respectively. It was a positive experience for everyone. The volunteers themselves gained valuable insights on life.

The PNSB is a publicly funded educational facility for youngsters of school age with vision impairment. The students live in dormitories on campus.

Jennifer and her co-volunteers brought basic needs: toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap and sacks of rice for the students staying in the dormitory inside the school. But more than these material gifts, what the blind children appreciated was the company.

One student said that they were so grateful for the visit because it was rare for them to engage with persons outside the school. It felt good that someone was personally interested in them, listening to their life stories, hobbies, talents and their on-going journey.

“Excitement could be seen in their eyes while telling their stories, about how they face, encounter and conquer situations they are living at a young age,” recalled Francine, one of the volunteers. “They need someone who can make them feel

special without making them feel like they are different.”

Francine and her friends discovered that what the students liked were lively people who could tell them about the world outside, i.e., how it looks and how it feels. “They need someone willing to sit beside them and spend time listening to their stories and telling them about people who have succeeded in life despite having disabilities,” Francine said.

Princess Geraldine, another volunteer, recalls her conversation with one of the students: "I asked her: 'What is your dream?'"

Princess was moved by her answer: “I want to be a teacher.”

"Kahit na bulag ako, gusto ko ituro sa magiging estudyante ko na hindi hadlang ang pagiging bulag o magkaroon ng kapansanan para makuha mo yung pangarap mo.

Kailangan mo lang magtiwala sa sarili mo". (Even if I am blind, I want to tell whoever my students will be that blindness or any other handicap is not an obstacle to achieve one's dreams. One must just trust in one's capabilities.)

“Her face bared the determination to pursue her dreams. That moment remains fresh in memory,” Princess shared. “I was touched and could hardly contain the joy that welled up in my heart! These students with impaired vision have such a capacity of envisioning their future and the drive to pursue it!”

The experience of the volunteers reaching out to the blind at PNSB demonstrates what the Prelate of Opus Dei told Jennifer at the general gathering in the MOA Arena. It validates the universal experience that “concern for others and service to others produces joy.”

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Corazon Salvador, the principal, said that the school would benefit from more supplies, equipment and facilities. PNSB's immediate needs include: a braille printer, paper and food for the student dormers.

Those who wish to help may get in touch with the principal: Mrs. Salvador at 09176391638, (02) 831-8664 or (02) 551-4567. Email: pnsb0770@gmail.com

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