

Spain gathering a powerful experience

“To be rather than to appear to be” is the reality of the identity of the young Vincentian of the 21st century. This was the focus of the Vincentian World Youth Gathering in Madrid, Spain.

Our group of 16 young adults and two charismatic Vincentian priests from the United States Eastern Province joined more than 1,800 young Vincentians, ages 18-35 from a host of nations. Our residence, the Colegio La Inmaculada-Marillac housed about half of the Vincentian delegation. The Vincentian delegation representing Spain, United States, Virgin Islands, Brazil, Austria, Laos, Vietnam, Greece, Philippines, Zambia, France, Germany and Australia to name a few, joined together as a proclamation of our desire to be closer to Jesus and to do the works of St. Vincent de Paul.

Our experience brought us closer to Jesus and to the poor as we lived modestly – “boot camp style” – for two weeks. Week one, which was the Vincentian World Youth Gathering, was a time of preparation for what we were to experience during the upcoming World Youth Day events. This was also a time for the young Vincentians to allow God into our lives and to open up our hearts and minds to be clear about our vocation and mission that began with St. Vincent de Paul. Components of the Vincentian Gathering consisted of the Eucharist, penance, fellowship, prayer and catechesis daily and fieldtrips to places of Vincentian work.

As Vincentians, we learned to give meaning to our lives by being (“to be”) aware of the realities of the world and to care for others as we witness about Jesus Christ to all those we serve. The Vincentian youths also learned that we are called to exemplify the zeal of our faith and mission by living out the Gospel values of Jesus through faith, hope, charity and love. Some insight we gained shed light that our faith gives us conviction that Jesus is the pearl in our lives.

As Christians we are to defend our faith and support our faith on a foundation rooted in Christ. In order to share love with others we must center God in our lives,

because God is love. We discussed that to be like Christ is to commit ourselves to the poor. Loving one another, especially the poor, is truly loving the Lord.

We also talked about how if we truly hope to encounter Jesus, we need to advocate like the Holy Spirit as we live out our daily lives. All this we learned through the various catechesis covering topics including Mary, mother of God, as the sower of hope in the church, how to root our lives in Jesus Christ to fit today's world, our challenge to bring the message of Jesus to the indifferent, systemic change and respect life issues. As we attended the different catechesis and workshops we were compiled into groups of various ethnicities and at times there were slight language barriers. However, everyone respected and encouraged one another to express themselves.

For all the nations to come together and participate in the Vincentian Gathering activities proved to be a very powerful and spiritual experience. We found common ground in our faith in God and our everyday life experiences as young adults. We established new international friendships and hope to keep these friendships lively thanks to social networking. The United States Eastern Province also created friendship bonds. Throughout our journey, we grew spiritually and personally, learning from each other's strengths, weaknesses and cultural differences.

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