

## World Youth Day 2011 My Experience!

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2011 17 young people from All Saints Parish, Greenwood and the Disciples of Jesus Community departed from Perth for what turned out to be an amazing experience!

The first stage of our journey was a mission trip to Vietnam. This was led by our Parish Priest, Father Vinh Dong. With us we took 10 bags of clothes and toys and \$6000 which was donated by the Parishioners.

The Mission phase included visits to two orphanages, where we spent time with the children, watched them give us a performance... then we had to perform something back! We gave out toys and clothes to them. At one of the orphanages, we all selected one or two children to sponsor and we will send them Christmas presents.

We also visited Father Peter Ny Tran who has set up houses for people with Aids. We went into two houses and spent time with the people, who are so isolated from society because of a misunderstanding that aids is more contagious than what it is.

From there we went out and gave food to the street kids. For most of them it was the first time they had seen white people! So we got a lot of stares! We also visited a school that the Dominican Sisters set up for the children who cannot afford to attend normal school. Here we donated stationary and more food for the children to improve their schooling experience.

I thought that the highlight for me would be the orphanages, however visiting the old people in their houses turned out to be a far greater experience of what the mission we were doing was all about. One lady lived in the smallest house I had ever seen! She was crying as a few of us went in a time to say hello and deliver some food to her. She said "How come you from the first world would come and visit me, in my house". This struck me as the most important thing about any mission and that it is all about relationships. It didn't matter that we brought food along, the fact was we were in here place and spending time with her.

We did many other things in Vietnam... too many for this article so I leave it there for now.

We then took flight off to Spain for the next phase of our journey.

World Youth Day can really be summed up in a few words! Crazy Semi Organised Chaos!

We stayed in a school on the floor with other Australians from Adelaide and Sydney. The showers were awesome.... If you can say that... 3 shower heads out in the open! Bathers were essential. The food was terrific. We were given restaurant vouchers, and if you found the right restaurant could eat so much!

Catechesis each morning was the highlight for me. It was where we really brought God into our journey and got to hear from Bishops all around the world. Our site was run by South Africans, so there was lots of dancing and singing! We had the opportunity to go to Reconciliation and sit in Adoration throughout the morning.

Another highlight was a night of praise and worship run by Lifeteen, which is an American based group that puts resources out for youth groups. At Greenwood we use lifeteen resources to run our youth groups, so it was good to see the people involved and how prayerful they are! This was my spiritual highlight and where I was able to really connect with God through praise and worship and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

It was so good just being surrounded by 1 and a half million other Catholics from all around the world. WYD really emphasises the fact we are a universal church. We understood and engage in

Mass, despite it being said in Spanish! And also to be surrounded by young people who are so happy and so much alive. Despite the craziness of it all! I think the world needs the witness that there are Catholics around and we are proud to be a Catholic.

Now from here! Pope Benedict spoke about the importance of us not just keeping WYD to ourselves but spreading it around, and inviting people to the next one. So as we travel on a journey of Faith it is really important that we share that journey and share God's love to all we meet so that we can keep the fire that has been set alight in us alive!

I ask for your prayers to help us all to do that.

Thankyou for your support in helping me to attend World Youth Day. I look forward to sharing with you in more detail about the trip.

God Bless.