



Gift of love

As part of Westwood Primary School's Values-In-Action Programme, the staff, together with our Primary 1 pupils, visited a Catholic home for the elderly in the neighbourhood. This visit enabled the participants to translate intangible personal values and beliefs into tangible reality, by putting their hands to what their hearts believe in.

Prior to the visit, Westwood Primary School had begun asking for food donations from the staff and pupils. The sight of different pupils, together with their parents, happily dropping off generous bags of donated food items at the school brought joy to everyone who was involved. In the eyes of the seven-year-olds, the first precious lesson that they learnt is simple but profound. They learnt that in giving, there is joy.

Walking through the doors, what greeted the eyes of the participants were untold stories. Many of these untold stories reside in the frail and weak bodies of elderly men and women. To the adults, we pondered silently how we can open some of these doors and reach out to them within the span of the visit. To the seven year olds, many of whom were still giggling and hopping away on their way to the home, the sight was sobering. They became serious, confronted with the reality and the contrast of their young lives with these aged aunties and uncles.

This sobriety was broken instantly by the Catholic nun in the home. She gave the children a welcoming smile and the warmth of her presence propelled one of the boys, Noel, to step forward to talk to the elderly. His childlike innocence pushed past any doors of resistance the elderly may have. These little interactions, games and the songs that the pupils sang brought precious smiles to many of the lined faces. The joy was contagious and the pupils began to fill the place with their chatter and laughter. The cycle of life takes a dramatic transformation; the young became the guides and the elderly became like little children, enjoying simple activities with childlike enthusiasm.

When it was time to bid farewell, the adults knew very well that this short visit may not have changed the reality and lives of the elderly by a large margin. However, what transpired in that place

was precious. The smiles on their faces and the contentment when they received the simple gifts made us realise that it is worthwhile to make someone's day, even if it was only for a day. What developed in the lives of the children were of paramount importance. Through this programme, we see values being inculcated in these young budding lives through the exposure to the world around them and being involved in the needs of others. Little Ethan remarked that he wants to make the elderly aunties and uncles happy because "I see their suffering". By being aware of others, he learnt the important value of serving others.

Gift of love far precedes charity work or donations. The best gift of love is through the giving of oneself, the rendering of one's heart to another and the reaching little hands grasping the lined, wrinkled hands. In turn, these lined, wrinkled hands share their experiences and their stories, educating and nourishing the little buds by teaching them the most important life lesson of all-that of love.

