

Tuesday, 4th September 2024.

We had breakfast from 7:00 am to 8:00 am at The Haven, the breakfast room at the YWCA, where we were accommodated. Morning devotion followed from 8:15 am to 9:00 am at the YWCA Chapel. We waited for our pick-up to Saint James Community (SJC) at 9:30 am and arrived at SJC at 10:00 am. The principal, teachers, and administrative staff were waiting for us upon arrival. We were then directed to the SJC Church, where we were welcomed and given a brief introduction about them. We were informed that after the tour of their community, we would meet at the SJC hall at 1:00 pm for lunch.

After the introduction, we proceeded to Level 10, where the students' classrooms are located. Upon arrival, we were told that all teachers from different denominations who teach at Saint James Primary School (SJPS) need to pray before entering their classrooms. There, they have a garden, and a space where children are given time to reflect on God. From there, we visited their Social Services Department, which runs recycling programs for people with disabilities. Many initiatives were undertaken by them, such as using damaged umbrellas to make raincoats and flowers, old school shirts to make dolls, and old trousers to make tool bags. It was amazing to see their talent and creativity.

Next, we visited the “Blue House” and the “Orange House.” The Blue House is all about their history and identity, showing how a family of 7-10 lived in a flat, and how one family, with 5-6 or more families, shared a room with one bed. These families also shared one kitchen, and with no proper sanitation, waste was disposed of in a bucket and carried to a waste truck. Bathing took place in the kitchen. The Orange House, on the other hand, represents a shift to new housing, with individual flats for each family, equipped with a bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and toilet. The community lives in a closely-knit relationship, where they look out for each other, ensuring no one is neglected.

At 12:50 pm, we returned to the SJC hall, where we were served lunch and presented gifts as a token of thanks. We left the SJC hall at 3:00 pm and returned to the YMCA.

Reflection:

If it wasn't for this pilgrimage tour, I wouldn't have experienced my encounter with the Saint James Community (SJC). During our welcome at SJC Church, the principal shared their Mission and Vision: “Equipping them as servants.” It's not about being served but about serving—a model of servant leadership. This reminds me of Mark 10:45, where Jesus says, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Servant leadership means serving wholeheartedly, as if serving the Lord, not people, for we know that the Lord will reward everyone for the good they do, whether they are slaves or free.

While traveling to Level 6, I noticed a Lego wall, where students join together the fruits of the Spirit. On Level 10, there is a prayer room, the “engine room,” where everyone must pray before entering their classrooms or offices. This is part of their religious education. The students also have a garden next to their classrooms, and in their free time, they are encouraged to reflect on God's love for them by looking at the plants around them. The community is Christ-centered, acknowledging God in everything they do. Proverbs 3:5-6 reminds us to exchange self-centeredness for a focus on God's wisdom: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”

We then crossed the road to the Social Services Department, which operates a recycling program for people with disabilities. They use damaged umbrellas to make raincoats, old school shirts to make dolls, and old school trousers to make tool bags. Their talents enable them to participate in these programs, aligning with the third Mark of Mission: responding to human need through loving service.

As priests, we are called to become like Christ. To do this, we must learn to love as He loves and to serve as He serves. That is the essence of servant leadership. As we moved to the Blue and Orange Houses, I was reminded that, once we are established, we often forget where we started. The Blue House serves as a reminder of their humble beginnings, even though it's now empty, while the Orange House reflects improved living conditions. Despite their advancement, they are reminded to remain grounded in Christ and to continue serving others in times of need.

