

Life Teen Convention

"I ventured out of my comfort zone and it was wonderful!"

Here is my story....

A few weeks ago, I was asked to attend the Life teen Convention. To be honest I was not looking forward to being away from home, especially over the weekend. The convention started on Friday evening 6pm to 10pm, Saturday 8.30am to 9.30pm and then Sunday 8.15am to 12.30pm. And to be truly honest I thought a 50+ year old in a stadium with 200-300 youth was not my idea of spending a weekend.

On arrival, I was surprised at the diversity of age, gender and culture amongst the youth present. That they were truly interested in the Life Teen life style. Remember this was all new to me, I had not attended a Life teen camp as many of the youth and adults that were present, had done.

On the Friday evening, we listened to speakers, who in their own special ways interacted and connected with the young adults present. Randy and Doug with their messages and stories, which included many laughable moments, to Lily who radiated the love of God through her bubblyness and energy that overflowed into the audience.

The night ended with the Stations of the Cross, done a little differently to what I am use too but still very moving.

I was starting to think a little differently..... maybe I could learn a bit more!

Saturday started with Mass, then we were able to pick the workshops we were most interested in.

My 1st workshop was 'Great Expectations' Navigating Ministry as an unpaid Youth Minister.

I think this is where the 1st Light Bulb moment happened. Here I was last week thinking I had drawn the short stick in having to come. Here I was being a 'glass half empty' person, this session taught me that we all need to have a positive approach or else we are doomed for failure. We need to turn our thinking around, to put out the positives that are happening in our parish, to feel good at what we are doing. Reviews should not dwell on what went wrong, yes, we do need to talk about these matters but move on once addressed. If we dwell on the bad, our eyes will be closed to the good. Have positive thoughts for 'that person who helped you with a ministry when you were 5 minutes late' be thankful or grateful even. Don't think they are trying to take over. It's thoughts like this that can hurt a community.

In the gospels last week (before Palm Sunday) Jesus tells us he is the "I AM", "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" -John 14:6

If Jesus is the big 'I AM' what does that make us? I AM NOT", it is not about us or the job that we do in the parish, it is about the reason we are here doing that ministry, that reason is Jesus!

My second Light Bulb moment was at 'Adoration' that evening, it had been a long day, I was tired, I wondered if the Lord would truly mind if in that hour an a half, if I spent half an hour with him and if he in his mercy would allow me to take a short nap in the time left. Please do not judge me, I was so tired, it had really been a long day and remember I am in the age bracket of 50+. Late nights and I do not go together!

Well was I ever so wrong! Adoration at Life Teen is not the Adoration I know. 12 songs were sung during this time. If the roof was not nailed down, I am certain it would have lifted! The Lord was truly present in that stadium. I was surprised, I looked around and here, young people had their arms lifted, their eyes closed but their faces said it all....they were at one with Jesus but together as a group, they felt a sense of belonging, a closeness with Christ our Lord

In that very moment, I felt an overpowering urge to also sing, I, who was so tired only 20 minutes prior, yawning, was now singing from the heart to praise our God.

Just a thought....

Are we not, all vessels or guardians for Jesus, just like the Monstrance? When we too receive the blessed sacrament of the Holy Eucharist each week at mass. How special is this?

So to finish my rambling, I have come to the conclusion, and maybe it was there all the time but my eyes were closed, we all need to have a sense of belonging, especially our youth who during the 9 to 15 years of age who are only now, coming to understand their identity. The one thing they do not want is to be different, they want to be accepted not only by their peers but by society. I know I still need to feel accepted and loved. So, it is up to us adults to support, nurture and accept that our ways may not always be the right way, that to praise God comes in many forms.

Thankyou to Faaki, Stephanie, Alex, Tina and Josh who accompanied me on this wonderful journey into the unknown but now feels like home.

May our Risen Lord Bless you this Easter,

Deb Lucy