

Emotional Recognition and Everyday Life

The Golden Rule defined by basic Catholic doctrine states that you should “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Jesus told us in the Gospel of Luke that the others emphasized in this saying are our ‘neighbors’, or anyone who is in need. When we walk in someone else’s shoes figuratively, we practice this rule. Considering this concept, I am reminded of the experience I had working with 360Kids, a non-profit organization that helps youth who find themselves in need of home, overcome crisis in their lives and transition to a state of stability in all aspects of their lives.

I was given the opportunity to work with 360Kids creating care packages for those who rely on the organization for shelter, food, and safety. I am not someone who is often privy to this experience – I come from a position of privilege, and am not familiar with the conditions that one would live in. Therefore, working with 360Kids was taking me out of my comfort zone. It was not easy to understand what those who required these services were going through, which is true for anyone coming from a position of privilege. Our position of familiarity with basic requirements for comfortable life, such as shelter and food, makes us less equipped to understand what someone who is, for example, homeless is going through. This is why I consider this an extremely valuable experience for me; in order to gather supplies for this project, I had to put myself into the shoes of a young person who had recently become homeless. I was able to see what someone who was less fortunate might need. When I considered this difficult position, I realized that there were a few necessities that those people would therefore be lacking.

The issue of a lack of care for those who are at risk, especially homeless youth, is something I was very much attempting to change within myself. While it is very easy to say that you care for a group, it is different when you are figuring out how to take action and make this care a reality. I often find myself falling prey to the concept of “thoughts and prayers”. Despite positive intentions, if no action is taken, this can lull us into a state of compliance with the injustice that we see. However, if we are able to utilize our sentiments correctly, we can make changes for the better. I find that my willingness to understand what others are going through is constantly building as I move through the different stages of my life, with the help of experiences such as this one. I hope, as well, that this empathy is something I can use to move myself and others to

action in fields that are severely neglected today. As people of the Catholic faith, we are called to help those who are in need. Empathy is a driving force behind this action.

It is very useful to have different perspectives, which are often a result of humane empathy, and our willingness to recognize the emotions that others are feeling. For high school students, it is important to have life experiences that teach such innate knowledge, simply because empathy is one example of a trait that must be learned through such experience. I consider such experiences to be extremely important in building a well rounded, humane, globally minded citizen. I especially hope to be able to use this as a gateway to help other groups at risk, in any way that I can.