

2014
"Saints Memorable Experience"
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Saints has provided many remarkable experiences over the last four years. I have been challenged intellectually and physically, made deep friendships, connected with insightful teachers, laughed much and celebrated personal and school successes on and off the field. But my most meaningful Saints experience occurred unexpectedly in my freshman year.

My freshman English teacher was Mr. Cudal. My classmates and I spent the first quarter in absolute awe of him. He could read minds, knew unknowable personal facts about each student and convinced us he could levitate. He required prodigious amounts of reading and homework and was a merciless grader. Over time, I realized Mr. Cudal was merely human but it was then that he provided my most memorable experience.

One day late in our first semester, Mr. Cudal asked for volunteers to make meals for the homeless after school. That afternoon a small group of us made several dozen sandwiches and traveled in Mr. Cudal's van to pass them out directly to homeless people in downtown. This simple exercise held much more meaning than I expected. In fact, it was profound. The contrast between my life and that of the homeless was stark. The sheer number of people living in the streets in dirty and dangerous situations left me dismayed; their appreciation for our help was heartwarming. During the drive back to Saints, we discussed the tragic reality faced by the homeless and need to reach out and help.

Afterwards, I did some research and learned that San Diego has between 8,500-10,000 homeless. I decided to take a modest step to address the issue. That January, with Mr. Cudal's support and guidance, my sister (who was at OLP at the time) and I organized a service project to help the homeless. On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2011, we gathered more than 80 Saints and OLP students to make 200 simple meals, which we combined with socks, blankets, soap and toothbrushes. We then walked the streets and handed the packages directly to the homeless. As we walked through downtown, the effect of the giving was clear, and our efforts, though small, made a difference in the lives of the homeless. I also saw students grasp the plight of the homeless in personal, humbling and meaningful ways. Some were literally moved to tears.

As a result of the projects success, we decided to make it an annual MLK Day service event. In the last four years, more than 350 student volunteers have directly helped almost 1200 homeless. Mr. Cudal and my family have taken time from their holiday each year to guide and work with us. This year we also involved Cathedral Catholic and Mater Dei, who coordinated their homeless outreach with us.

I am proud of the MLK Day project. We have quietly provided assistance to the homeless. Perhaps more importantly, we gave a window to the student volunteers into the difficulties faced by the homeless. And hopefully they became sensitized to the plight of the homeless – just as I did four years ago on that afternoon with Mr. Cudal and my classmates.

That afternoon outreach my freshman year was a catalyst event. It caused me to think more deeply and then act to help my community. This lesson was much more powerful than anything I learned inside the classroom. The fact that I had the opportunity to come face-to-face with homelessness – and then the support I received when I had an idea to help – is a testament to the Saints community's commitment to the less fortunate.