

Pro-Life Youth Bring Christmas Joy and Love to Special Souls

On December 19, 2019, I had the privilege of joining Fr. Dave Atanasio, the chaplain at Saint John the Baptist High School and other members of the Gianna Club, (including Moderator Kerri MacEwen) on a trip to the Brookside Multi-care Nursing Center in Smithtown. The Gianna Club is a club at Saint John the Baptist High School with a mission to defend and respect the lives of all human beings from conception to their natural death. The Brookside Multi-care facility takes care of both seniors and children who are disabled or unable to support themselves. At Brookside, the Gianna Club met with students from Holy Trinity High School and their chaplain, Fr. Liam McDonald. Together, with the accompaniment of Theresa Marino (Campus Minister, Trinity HS) playing the guitar, we went room to room singing numerous Christmas carols to the patients of the facility.

My time at the Brookside Multi-care Center was one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever been privileged to participate in. Together as a group, we were able to bring so much joy and happiness to the patients there. That is what the Christmas Spirit is all about, the joy of bringing Jesus to those in need of His love and compassion. The Gianna Club strives to participate in events like this one at Brookside in order to help others and show respect for those at all stages of life.

All of us thank Donna Crean, Assistant Director of the Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics in the Diocese of Rockville Centre for organizing this event and accompanying us in this Mission. She brings Christ's truth, light and joy to all of us and her humor and kindness with the patients lifted their spirits. She is a blessing!

Charles Smith, 10th Grade

The opportunity to go Christmas Caroling at Brookside Multi-Care Nursing Center with those at Holy Trinity was an opportunity I knew I couldn't pass up. Through personal experience, I am familiar with what it is like being in the hospital during the holiday season. During my lifetime, I've had family members who unfortunately were forced to spend their holidays in a hospital bed, not surrounded by those who deeply love them and care about them constantly, and often, being in that position is sad. Day to day, there may not be something to always look forward to, which is why I felt obligated to join my classmates in attendance to the hospital.

Upon arrival, you could already feel the excitement on the children's faces as we took out our instruments and handed out sheets of paper with lyrics on them for those who were able to follow. If that wasn't already an experience, when we began singing, the ones who were familiar with the songs even sang along or gave their approval of how much they appreciated and liked the songs. Now I know that I don't have the best voice, but at that moment, I felt compelled to sing along with everyone simply because of the smile it brought to their faces. The joy and the spirit of Christmas were felt in the room, as we looked into each of the residents (young and old) eyes. The dignity of each human person was celebrated that day as we celebrated Christ who in the Incarnation redeemed our humanity.

Later on, we went room to room singing songs for those who weren't able to leave their hospital beds; an even more unforgettable experience. I recall an adorable little girl, Mikayla, just 5 years old, who joined us going room to room singing along with us. Later on, a patient even played for us a 5-minute song that he composed on the piano, which he taught himself to play. The experience that evening was unmatched; I left the hospital with a type of warmth in my heart that I rarely experience. I am thankful for the experience that I had that day, and would do it again in a heartbeat. Thank you to Fr. Liam MacDonald, chaplain, Theresa Marino, campus minister and Donna Crean, Assistant Director of Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics, for arranging this outing.

Aaron Essien, Class of 2020