

A summer camp with Chiro and carry camping



Every year, around 70 per cent of children in Europe attend a summer camp during their school holidays. As part of their school holidays, the children have to spend from one to three weeks in the great outdoors, playing, enjoying activities and making new friends. This time is also a time of trying their hand at some new sports, having fun and exploring new spiritual experiences. The leaders plan these camps to give young people increased confidence and independence, while encouraging team building and creating a family spirit. These activities bring a friendly Catholic spirit all over Europe organised by such groups as CHIRO, CASA, PATROS, SVP, CWL, and YOUTH 2000, etc. It was with this in mind that this Summer I have spent two weeks camping with young people of St Joseph's Parish of Balegem of the Diocese of Gent.

1. Departure Our camp was held at Gardens, in the city of Liège in Belgium. Some of us took the train and others, that is to say the leaders went by car. We spent six hours to reach the camp site. I left our community early morning, driving with Tom, someone who is thinking about religious life. I found that camping for a month with young people was an amazing experience. This is the program we followed:

2. The activities. During our stay, the first activity was theatrical. This was opened by the leader of the group in the memory of the children who live in war countries. After the play had been performed, I was asked to say an opening prayer and talk about Chiro in the Congo and about the identity of the priest in the secular world today. We played games, music, football, cycling and spent five minutes of reflective prayer, etc. The activity I enjoyed most was talking about our Founder to the young people. This was a fun – packed summer event. I was asked to be a team leader. In my team we cooked food and made decisions. Most young people liked to be in my group because I did not use their Flemish language they were speaking correctly! Next morning, we went on foot into the city which was about 20 miles away. The young people found the way back very tiring. To solve, the problem, we phoned for a bus to take us back home. Each day started at 8 o'clock and finished for some at 2 pm and for others as late as 11 pm. Each leader looked after the children. It was a difficult task for me since I do not speak their language correctly. By being together with the young people in the camp, my own desire was to bring these young men the meaning and the sense of religious life. I believe this would be a good way revive the idea of religious vocations in Europe. Indeed, I was surprised by the fact that young people had never heard about religious congregations nor seminaries. I tried to explain who I am? And who the priest was, who celebrated our mass. Photos associated with events

Playing game with children. Playing games with my group Cooking food and sharing. Not only were we playing but we cooked our own meals. I tried to cook Congolese food for the leaders since it was impossible to make Congolese food for everyone in the camp. Drama club. A drama was performed by our team which won a gold medal. Sport: Netball, Rounder, running bicycle, and football Bicycles were used for our amusement. We cycled for 50 kilometres from 7 Pm until midnight. War games These were the most vigorous activities of our camp. Young people played the part of soldiers while the leaders were the army captains.

I am hoping that there will be more of this camp next year!



A Day in the Life at K.U.Leuven/Belgium

Situated in the heart of Western Europe, KU Leuven has been a centre of learning for more than six centuries. Founded in 1425 by Pope Martin V, K.U. Leuven bears the double honour of being the oldest existing Catholic University in the world. The University has a good reputation. This academic reputation attracts students from all over the world. KU Leuven has been involved in the Erasmus students exchange programme. Besides these exchange programmes, the University has set up a number of international academic programmes aimed both at Belgian and international students. Not only am I student in KU Leuven but above all, I am religious belonging to a community. The followings are my daily activities all over the year.



Prayer

Depending on the day of the week, I start my daily timetable with either mass or Morning Prayer at 6.30am. The time before this is spent in prayer, either in the room or in the chapel of the community with my confreres. In fact, this is the ideal time to be with God. Also, it is good to be with the Lord at a time when our hearts are more receptive and perhaps less cluttered with the worries and concerns of the day ahead. In our community, the prayer is led by Father Joseph who is in the old school of priesthood, that is to say, he prefers the traditional liturgy.

Community life

Our community consists of five confreres: Father Raymond, Father Achiel, Father Willem and myself. Our daily Eucharist is at the heart at our community. We come together to hear the word of God and to praise him, and to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Our community prayer, with the Eucharist at the centre roots us in Christ as member of one family. After Morning Prayer, breakfast follows, and that we enjoy a sumptuous feast of eggs, bacon, sausages. Generally, four of us together but sometimes Father Willem (who is living at Schapenstraat) comes in unexpectedly. We never quite know whether he is in or out because he has a very busy apostolate. Always busy with his apostolate, he is man of surprises. Hopefully, the confreres will read as soon as possible the novel by Father Achiel whose title: "Le Grand Secret du Father Willem".

Lectures at the University

Our first lecture begins at 8.30 and the last ends at 6 pm. The lectures at KU Leuven are given to all students together, that is to say, the programme for the bachelor degree is the same from the first year till the third year. We are divided into our year groups, and follow some courses that are appropriate and suitable for that stage of our formation. From the third year we embark upon the bachelor's Degree in Theology. As a second year student, I am going to study the following subjects: the Church History part II, Philosophy of Religion, The Letters of St Paul, Moral Theology, Christian Worship, Applied Theology, Psychology of Religion, Globalisation and the Church, Human Understanding, Ministry in Western Culture, Old and New Testament Exegesis: Synoptics/ Pentateuch, Christology and Trinity, Foundation of Canon Laws, Hebrews, Sacraments, Marriage Laws of the Church etc. Each morning at KUL, we have four hours of lectures and in the afternoon, five hours. At 11.10 a.m the students and the professors

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