Spirituality



Rose Adrat, College COP participant from SUNY-ESF in Syracuse, New York; Fr. Fred Nickle, chaplain for Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries; and Rose Ousey, College COP participant from Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. They performed service work at Wingate nursing facility. (Provided photo)



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From Jan. 7-11, students from 13 different colleges gathered at Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries in Garrison, New York, for a week of prayer, community and service.

Ministries has led the College Capuchin Outreach Program, or College COP, for over twenty years. The 2018 edition was led by Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Fr. Marvin Bearis, Fr. Fred Nickle, and me, along with CapCorps volunteers Krista Sudyk and Andrew Pugliese, who have each committed a year of service to work with teenagers at Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries.

In addition to their Christ-centered service, participants of College COP spent their week in daily mass and morning prayer, communal meals, adoration, presentations on vocations and service, and a spirited talent show.

Students chose their ministry for the week from five sites in the Hudson Valley:

- Wingate Nursing Facility
- Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh
- St. Patrick's Soup Kitchen, in Newburgh, New York
- Newburgh Ministry, a drop-in center for basic needs and a thrift store
- Inspire, a school for children with developmental delays and/or disabilities

"Wingate Nursing Home is always excited to welcome us back each year. They call us 'young and fresh faces,' " joked Fr. Fred, 79. Joining Fr. Fred at Wingate was Rose Ousey from Elizabethtown College. "This was my first time at a CYFM event," said Ousey. "I was amazed at the loving community that formed so quickly. It was awesome to serve the elderly during the day and then worship, discuss and laugh with my peers in the evening."



College COP participants Timothy Fenton, from Siena College in Loudonville, New York; Mar-garet Delorey, from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York; Joe Ferrone, from King's College, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania; Ben Reale, from Dutchess Community College, Poughkeepsie, New York; and Joe Whitton. Their group served Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh. (Provided photo)

The crew volunteering with Habitat for Humanity braved the snow and cold elements to assist the organization's Greater Newburgh headquarters in preparing for their annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. Pugliese, who led the group, said the time spent organizing materials and cleaning up the warehouses was an awesome opportunity to serve the men and women who do so much service for those in need.

"[Habitat for Humanity does] a great service and to be a small part of that makes me yearn to do more for my community," said Joe Ferrone, who had been active in retreats at Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries as a high school student.

Sudyk led a group that split time between St. Patrick's Soup Kitchen and Newburgh Ministry. "[Both] these places serve the same community in different ways," Sudyk said. "What most amazed me was that these places were not just providing for a physical need such as food, shelter or clothing, but they also provide a place of love, comfort and belonging. I could feel the sense of true community there." Sudyk and Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries had previously worked with Newburgh Ministry and Sr. Norma Carney of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to build and deliver bunk beds for families in need in October 2017.

After working at their ministry sites during the day, students returned to Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries for prayer, supper and theological reflection discussion groups. The theological reflections groups provided a space for students to share where they found Christ in their ministry. After the closing Mass and personal sharing, students felt spiritually enthused for their second semester.

"College COP allowed me to refocus my heart before returning to college for the spring semester," said Bailey Zimmitti, a sophomore at Providence College. "The retreat's theme of patient endurance and hopeful love reminded me to fix my eyes on God during both chaos and peace, both trial and triumph. The friars and lay staff at CYFM prepared a beautiful blend of prayer, service, and fellowship that made College COP a great blessing."

Danielle Drop, a senior at Hofstra University on Long Island, New York, like Ousey, was at Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries for the first time. She found good examples of faith and service in her peers. "Knowing that college life can pull you in every kind of direction, I was inspired by these people who are so strongly dedicated to the church and who were willing to give up some of their winter break to serve on this retreat," Drop said.

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The goal of College COP was not just to spend a week in service, but to deepen relationships with Jesus, build community and Catholic identity, and realize our place and purpose in the kingdom of God. Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries leads retreats and service weeks year-round in the Hudson Valley with teenagers, college students and families. For more information on Capuchin Youth and Family Ministries, visit cyfm.org. More information about the CapCorps Volunteer Program is

available here.

[Erik Lenhart is a Capuchin Franciscan Friar ministering at St. Pius X Parish in Middletown, Connecticut.]