

AN UNFORGETTABLE WORK CAMP

Piarist Province of Betania

Belén Songel y Natalia Verger, voluntarias.



In July 1993, a group of 22 young people from the Hinnení youth groups in Valencia had the experience of living in community for two weeks at the service of the most needy. They organised school support for the most needy in the school, in a refugee centre and with the children of the neighbourhood. Those who participated declared that it was such an impacting experience that it gave rise to a Piarist social volunteering (VES) that committed itself to continue collaborating with various children's associations and accompanying young people who are restless for service.

Year after year, summer work camps were organised, initiating hundreds of young people in social commitment, opening up new human and Christian perspectives.

The VES Association became part of the Itaka-Escolapios network, but continued to work in the same dynamic, already connected with the young people of the Calasanz Movement. For the last 10 years, this experience has also been carried out in Aluche (Madrid).

29 years later, in July 2022, a new work camp was organised in the Pious Schools "San Joaquin" in Valencia, which always welcomes young people very well. We take in this post the experience that Belén and Natalia have had.

The work camp is a two-week experience that brings together 20 young people with the aim of experiencing volunteering to the full. During the two weeks, we go in the mornings to different associations (Saó, Llum, Juana María and Proyecto Vivir) which, through urban camps, offer children the opportunity to spend a good summer.

Although most of us are from Valencia or the surrounding area and we could easily come and go every day; what makes this experience really different is that it is not limited to giving yourself to the service through the children, but it is an experience of integral volunteering, learning and personal development. Not only do we go to the associations in the mornings, but in the afternoons we receive training related to volunteering as a way of life.

The group of volunteers this year has been quite heterogeneous, we had people, as usual, from the schools of Carniceros, Calasanz and Gandía, but there were also young people from other parts of Spain, specifically Madrid, Vitoria and Tenerife. In addition, two Piarist juniors from Indonesia were with us. This has allowed us to share the different cultures and to make this experience even more enriching. Despite the heterogeneity, we have had a group feeling from the first days, which has helped to create a safe space where we have been able to express ourselves and share our feelings and experiences of the day to day.

I think we speak for everyone when we say that these have been two weeks that have left no one indifferent and we will carry the experience with us forever. So we invite you, if this opportunity arises, not to miss it.

