

Archbishop Smith: Uplifted by Uplift

On Saturday, I visited the site of Catholic Social Services' annual Day of Mercy, called Uplift. The name is apt. That day, many people were given a "lift up" as they filed through the doors of St Alphonsus church and the community league building next door. In these venues, the people received free clothing, haircuts, bicycle repair and family photos, along with a hot meal.

As I walked through the buildings, I could see many staff and volunteers giving generously – and joyfully – of their time and talent to give concrete assistance and real hope to adults and children in serious need. I saw, too, the many donations made possible by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Evergreen Catholic Schools and others.



In short, what I witnessed on Saturday was a concrete manifestation of the Church in action, of the Gospel proclaimed in deed.

The experience was a wonderful preparation to hear the Gospel proclaimed on Sunday. According to the passage from Mark (9: 30-37), Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Clearly, the more than 100 staff and volunteers involved in Uplift were deliberately making themselves last, rendering themselves servants, so that persons in need might receive help. By their actions, I myself was edified, uplifted, and thus

challenged to make ever more real in my own life the summons of the Gospel to follow Christ through service to others.



In fact, there are many lessons to be drawn from this event. The one that stands out for me is this: small acts of love have a huge positive impact. A fresh haircut, the price of which is often beyond the reach of many; a family photo that could not be had other than through the generosity of the photographer; or a simple bag of freshly popped popcorn were enough to let people know that we recognize and honour their inherent dignity, which no circumstance, however difficult, can ever take from them.

This lesson was further exemplified by the many donations of socks and underwear. A few years ago, as Catholic Social Services was planning to launch this annual event, they asked people living on the street what they needed more than anything else, and the clear answer was socks and underwear. Sometimes we might be tempted to think that there is not much one can do to alleviate the suffering of so many. Not so! The simple act of donating a basic necessity sends the clear signal that those who need it are worthy of our attention and love. This message hits home and gives hope.



We do not need to wait a year before we reach out again. Uplift shows us the way we can make a difference for someone else every day, if we but seek to be aware of the need and ask what simple things we might do to make a difference.

Thank you, Catholic Social Services!

