

## SUMMER CAMPING “GROWING UP IN JESUS”

Summer is the season of examinations, trips, farewells, etc. However, there were 47 young people from every corner of Vietnam taking part in the Summer camping “Grow up in Jesus” of Congregation Notre Dame in Couvent des Oiseaux- Dalat.

At about 3 p.m. on 6th July 2023, our two buses from Regina Mundi- Saigon arrived at Dalat. Most of the attendants were students in universities and high schools, and some were post-graduated.



Thank God for granting us a safe trip and perfect weather. “Walking in faith” was the very first lesson to lead them into the course. Campers were blindfolded and totally trusted their guides. They experienced walking in the dark, despite being nervous and afraid but they still felt secure because there was always someone walking by their sides to guide them.



The next morning, after having breakfast, the camp was officially opened with the theme song “Make Him grow up” and introduction by the Organizing Committee. Each team received a candle which represented the team’s soul, thus, they must keep it burning all the time. Then, they started setting up their tents and then played outdoor activities. After break time was the next lesson: “Journey of Grace” and the opening mass was offered at 10:30 a.m. by Father J.B Doan Minh Sang- vicar of Du Sinh parish. In the afternoon, they had two lessons: “Heart Conversion” and “Pray with the Bible”. In the evening, to change the atmosphere, the campers had a chance to play, sing and dance together, which brought them closer.

The third day of the camping started with the morning mass on 8th July 2023. After receiving the bread of life and having breakfast after that, 4 teams played traditional games enthusiastically. The two next lessons “Discernment in normal life” and “Contemplative Dialogue and the Examen” meant a lot to participants.



In the afternoon, the campers learned to realize their mission with the topic: “I’m me for whom?”, beside, they were introduced to the founders of Congregation Notre Dame as well as our charism and mission. When the night fell, they came to “Journey of Following Jesus Part 1”. At every station of the Via Dolorosa, they wrote down their sufferings, sorrows, dreams, and hurt, then crucified them on the cross as incorporating their cross with Jesus’. Every evening, there were always sisters available for the campers to come and share.

On Sunday, 9th July 2023, when a new day dawned, the campers were ready for “Journey of following Jesus part 2” in the format of a big game. On that journey, they had to humble themselves, went through the narrow gate, and gave up their comfort, bad habits, and egos. Starting with discovering God’s will, they were instructed to “turn down the volume of the world” by following Mother Mary’s guidance: “Do whatever

*he tells you" (Jn 2, 5).* This could only be done when they dared to withdraw to a quieter place, avoid the noise of life, and somehow, their participation in this summer camp was also a way to reduce the world's volume. The next station was abandonment to help them leave the things that prevented them from freely following Jesus behind, from external possessions to internal ones, passions, knowledge, or talents. After abandoning, they had to discern God's call by listening to the sounds of life, of their hearts, and others' and then combining them into a meaningful story that showed God's will. Thus, they could make decisions and find out Jesus as their precious treasure and others as God's gifts. The highlight of this journey was the ritual of washing one another's feet and burning the campers' offerings which were crucified on the cross last night. The fire broke out, the smoke rose, and all of them seemed to wash away all the burdens that had been on these young people for so long, paving the way for liberation, for a healing journey.



After those quiet moments, in the afternoon, the attendants had a tour visiting Da Lat city: the Cathedral, Domaine de Marie Hill, and Dalat flower garden. On that last evening, they sat side by side with a candle holding in each one's hand, shared the feelings of the past days and confirmed certain good characteristics they learned or appreciated on another camper. May tears, happy smiles, warm hugs, all the memories, gratitude, love, friendship, and fruits of the camp days be engraved in their hearts. On Monday 10th July 2023, after attending the morning mass, having breakfast and cleaning rooms, we got on the buses to come back to Saigon.

The parting had both tears and smiles. On the bus, a group of friends discussed: "At the very first time, I thought that I couldn't make friends with new people, just played with our group, but actually, I could talk and get to know a lot of friends, so much fun!".



Back to their daily life, the rhythm of life is still the same, but I hope that each young person will put on a new "me", full of love, faith, joy, and energy to be able to "make Jesus grow up".

*"Climbing up the mountain with God but it is not the last step  
For when you are renewed, you will learn to see with the eyes of faith  
To see God in others and His will in duty  
Back to a busy life, but He is always there at every stop!"  
- The song "Run away with God"*

*The Vicariate of Viet Nam*

*Vocation ministry*

