

LAVALLA WEEKEND

MARIST BROTHERS CENTER AT ESOPUS



The 3rd annual LaValla weekend found seventeen high school students and six young adults travel from near and far to the Marist Brothers Center at Esopus. Working to recapture the spirit and excitement of the early days of the Institute and the life of the early brothers in LaValla, this years ' service project included ongoing maintenance of the Chapel in the Woods, the addition of two new "stations" to the Champagnat Meditation Path, and finally, brush removal and path construction in a site which will become the home of a new MBCE labyrinth. The following reflections witness to the Spirit of God working through this program jointly sponsored by the Marist Brothers' Vocation Office, the Office of Marist Evangelization and the MBCE.



How did the manual labor done connect to your own spiritual life and relationship with God?

I am amazed at what we were able to accomplish today. I learned how working can bring people closer together. We struggled pulling roots, dragging loads of mulch, raking and carrying tons of leaves together and it made me realize that when we work together anything is possible. It also made me feel closer to everyone, knowing that we are all inspired by the work of Marcellin Champagnat.



I learned that work is not always easy. Work is never "finished", but the more you devote yourself to it, the easier it is to maintain. Likewise, a relationship with God is not something to be neglected, and requires hard work and diligent effort.

While I was raking today I thought to myself, "I could and should do this more at home." This applies to my spiritual relationship with God because I should not only focus on living the Marist values out this weekend, but bring them home with me and continue to live them there as well.



Today I mostly raked, mulched and removed loose sticks on a path we were making. This is connected to my spiritual life because often times I have to de-clutter my relationship with God. I have to weed out things in my life to unveil my faith. Sometimes I can get caught up in gossip, grades, etc. and neglect my relationship with God. I think I need to de-clutter.



Today we cleaned up what seemed to be an endless mess! I can see this mess being a lot like my spirituality. My relationship with God is scattered with doubt and questions, just like that clearing was with dead branches and stumps. We needed hard work and determination to clear it. I guess that is what it will take to clean up my spiritual life.

Reflections from the MBCE labyrinth journal:

To whoever is reading this post-labyrinth journal entry: Believe in your own talents and believe in the talents of those around you. "Anything in life is 1,000 times sweeter when shared."

General Grace Hopper once said: "A ship is always safe in harbor, but wasn't built for a harbor. Coming off this LaValla experience, this holds especially true for me. The things I have learned are irreplaceable. Never be afraid to branch out and do what you believe is right.



I learned just how far Marist reaches and I feel a little proud. I am eager to bring this home and plant the seeds there.