

**The “Entertainment Week” in “COSECHA ”,
a Social and Educational Centre of the Assumption:
a space where Assumption Transformative Education is evolving**

“To educate a child takes a whole tribe”

This African proverb could well be applied to the “Entertainment Week” organised by COSECHA (Assumption Social Work Education Centre, Chile).



For several years the Sisters of the Assumption have run this Centre in ÑUÑO A, working with the population of Salvador Cruz Gana, a slum in Santiago, Chile. The social context is difficult, as there is a problem of drug use and excessive consumption of alcohol among the population. This means that while children play in the park, they see many adults using alcohol or interacting with drug dealers. In this situation, for the children the Harvest Centre represents an educational oasis in the desert.

The sisters offer a library service and organise various workshops: Bible study, weaving, cooking, crafts, etc., as well as a club for the rehabilitation of alcoholics. Through these activities, different sectors of the population, from children to the elderly, are sheltered at the Harvest Centre from the problems of daily living. Harvest is a place where all can live together in an

atmosphere of respect, listening and finding the love that everyone needs to grow in a healthy environment.

In addition to these daily activities, twice a year the Sisters of the Assumption organise "ENTERTAINING WEEK". This is a series of fun activities (workshops, reflections and prayer), the purpose of which is to educate the children of the population. During this week, the whole community participates at Harvest, including sisters, volunteers, people of Assumption Together, and parishioners of Santa Catalina. And it is precisely in this community experience that the African proverb quoted at the beginning is fully incarnated.

The various chapels of the parish contribute money to defray the cost of materials for the workshops, as well as food for the mid-morning snack. In the vicinity of Harvest, friends of the Assumption, people of Assumption Together, participants of this activity in the previous year and parish volunteers are all available to the Sisters to help organise all that is needed for "Entertainment Week" In this way, the neighbourhood becomes a cooperative community where all find a space to offer the best of themselves for the sake of the children.

This winter, from 20th to 24th July, Entertaining Week aimed to raise awareness among children - and through them among their families - that the earth is a gift from God and that we therefore have a responsibility to care for it and so to give glory to the Father.

The week was attended by about seventy children between four and fourteen years old. Each day there were workshops for each age group in cooking, crafts, movement and sports.

In these workshops, through different types of activities, the children deepened the theme of the day, always in relation to the overall aim. They did so informally, building, dancing, playing and enjoying themselves together. Each could thus participate in the week in their own way, helping the participants to live together, to respect one another and to reflect. Above all, in this space everyone could find a way to live differently in the circumstances to which they are accustomed in the neighbourhood.

Each day was guided by a slogan. The first was "*God gives us a house: our planet*". The aim was to prompt an awareness that Creation is a gift that God makes us with his infinite love, a gift for all which we should value and appreciate. The theme was presented during the first hour of the morning in the chapel through songs and reading the Word, enlivened by dramatic presentations.

After this initial reflection, all the children went to their workshop for the rest of the day. Guided by their group of helpers, they participated in fun activities like drama, singing, choreographing and practising a dance, building, playing sports, baking bread, cooking cupcakes etc. It is noteworthy that the group of helpers consists of young people who have participated in the Entertaining Week and who, having grown up, continue to participate in it as leaders, supported by a responsible adult.

On the second day there was a change of workshops and the new slogan: "*The Earth is a place of glory for God.*" We wanted to highlight the importance of valuing the gift from the Father and to

realise that through taking care of the earth's resources, respecting the plants, the streets, the neighbourhood and the people close to us, we give glory to God.

The third day we continued with the next slogan, "*Let us join hands and take care of the gift.*" Through this reflection, the children came to realise that a personal gesture, insignificant at first glance, can change our small environment and thus the world, you just need everyone we propose to.

The fourth day, the reflection focused on the *personal commitment of each*: small gestures like sorting rubbish, recycling or reusing items, turning off the tap when brushing your teeth and using less water when taking a shower. This commitment was worked on throughout the morning to prompt an awareness amongst the children that they must take responsibility for caring for our planet through small routines. That afternoon, the families of all the children were invited to participate in "Entertainment Week". They could enjoy the exhibition of crafts that the children put on, sample the home-made cakes, buns, cupcakes and breads, and watch the dances the children had prepared with enthusiasm. After the exhibition, the families participated in a reflection in the chapel where they were shown what had been worked on during the week. They were also invited to delve into ecological awareness to improve their homes and neighbourhood for the family.

Through this week marked by lively and entertaining activities, it was possible to evangelise children and families, spreading the inspiring message that Pope Francis gives us in his encyclical "Laudato Si". The week seemed to us to embody the concept of transformative education which is part of the charism of the Assumption because:

- it is a transformative activity which mobilises the entire community.
- through children, the message extends to their families and all the members of the parish.
- the community is inspired to collaborate with the Sisters for this activity.
- the experience, marked by a healthy coexistence and by joy, dialogue, hope and respect, makes this small space of land that is Ñuñoa a place of glory for God.

As usual, the week closed with an outing, this year to the Aeronautical and Space Museum, where the children received a bracelet with the slogan "*our waste, our responsibility*" to be worn as a reminder of the experience during the week.

The young people returned home with the impression of having shared fun moments with other children, outside the context of their problematic neighbourhood, and marked by an atmosphere of great love, joy and mutual respect. All left with the desire to participate in the next Entertaining Week in the summer, but also with something planted inside: the awareness that creation is a gift from God that we must respect and care for. This awareness grows in daily life, through our small actions at home and in the neighbourhood.

In this way we sow seeds for the children's future. So the Sisters of the Assumption in ÑUÑO A are planting a small seed of God - like a grain of mustard - but certainly in the future it will give a good HARVEST (COSECHA).

**RELIGIOUS OF THE ASSUMPTION
COMMUNITY OF SANTIAGO DE CHILE
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