

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

【Youth Category – 3rd Prize】

The Life

(Original)

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As time passes by, answers to many questions are found but some questions are timeless, revealing new dimensions each time they are asked. I was forced to ask myself one of these questions a few years ago. That day, I was randomly watching a few videos. One of them touched me in a way that I couldn't comprehend at first. It was a video where a man decided to talk to some beggars in various parts of the city where he lived. It was his interaction with one of those beggars which stunned me. As he approached the beggar who was basically a young man, he greeted him and the young man returned his greeting with a smile. He sat down with the young man on the subway and they began to talk. The young man didn't mind being on camera. He disclosed that he was brought up in an orphanage. Once he became an adult, he took refuge in the subway. People would pass him by and some would give him food to eat. This was his life.

But none of these was what rend my heart with a force which even I couldn't comprehend. As the man was about to leave, the young man urged him to stay a bit longer. He told him with a tinge of sadness that he was lonely. He even offered the man some food just to make him spend some more time with him. The man himself was really surprised and said that his food would get over fast if he took it. The young man told him that someone would always give him food but no one would stop to just talk to him. I could see that he was really depressed and lonely even though he was very sweet and well mannered. After some time, the man bid him goodbye and proceeded to talk to other beggars in different places. Once the video was over, I felt as if my heart was totally numb. A few minutes later, I started crying so uncontrollably that I astonished myself. Reflecting back, I understood what hurt me so much was not just that he was lonely and depressed but that in the world that we proudly claim to have advanced so much, we have also come to a point where even beggars are ready to give food just to get people to talk to them. The idea that a beggar would trade his food for a little bit of love and concern to be shown to him is just plainly

shocking. This hard reality was what pierced my heart. This made me ask the question - what is life?

Is it advancements and progress at the cost of relationships and quality time with family and friends?

Is it just speaking about how meaningful our own life is supposed to be and living it out to satisfy ourselves and our loved ones alone?

Is it just about supplying materials to refugee camps and boasting about it to the media and in newspaper articles?

Is it just about donating a few articles and taking photos with those people for your own publicity while at the same time destroying their self esteem and diminishing their image in the eyes of others?

Life is a service. It is a service given to make others realize that they are truly alive, not as statistics but as real persons of irreplaceable worth. It is to serve people without letting them feel in any manner that they are a burden and that it is costing us a lot just to care for them. It is not about making them feel dependent and tightening their mental and emotional chains. It is to offer a hand to lift them up so that they will be equipped to do the same for others without a condescending attitude and to help them realize what it truly means to be human. A selfless life that seeks to help while at the same time takes care to preserve the dignity of the other is a life worth emulating like that of Mother Teresa. This is life, to serve considering it an honour and not a duty.