

***Jose De Piro Kabataang Orkestra* wins Australian CaSPA Social Action Funding Grant**

Pope Francis has asked many times during his Papacy to support and work with those at the margins: “Go forth and reach out to all people at the margins of society! Go there and be the Church, with the strength of the Holy Spirit.”

To enhance the Church’s social teaching and provide opportunities for those in need, CaSPA (Catholic Secondary Principals Australia) and its corporate partners have encouraged secondary schools in Australia to apply for the annual Social Action Funding Grant aimed at providing support to those within remote Australia or in neighbouring countries.

The Faith and Mission Team from Thomas Carr College, Tarneit, in Victoria were recently delighted to learn that their application to support the work of the *Jose De Piro Kabataang Orkestra* was successful.

This application was aimed at supporting the Missionary Society of St Paul’s *Jose De Piro Kabataang* Foundation, which auspices the music program of *Jose De Piro Kabataang Orkestra* (Youth Orchestra) which is comprised of more than 60 talented young musicians from impoverished and disadvantaged families in Dinalupihan, in the Province of Bataan, Philippines.

Thomas Carr College has forged very strong links with the MSSP. Over the past 10 years, we have:

- engaged in annual fundraising to support many of the congregation’s missionary outreach projects (particularly those located in the Philippines)
- organised a missionary immersion trip for our Year 12 students to support projects such as the provision of much-needed educational resources for the local primary schools in remote areas of the Philippines, and the building of an Education Centre at the *Jose De Piro* Formation Centre which provides vocational skills training and tuition in music and the arts
- in 2019, the College and the parishes of St James the Apostle & St Bernadette’s funded the *Jose De Piro Kabataang Orkestra* to travel to Australia where the



orchestra played to full venues at Thomas Carr College, Tarneit; Trinity College, Colac; Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook; and Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg.

The orchestra was established by missionary priest, Fr Joseph Cremona mssp in 2013. When Fr Joe first arrived at St Catherine of Alexandria parish, he was overwhelmed by the immense poverty and challenges faced by the community, particularly by the young people whose future was bleak because of lack of opportunities and a sense of hopelessness that prevailed.

With a belief in the importance of education through the arts and in the power of music to transform lives, Fr Joe embarked on a small music program designed to teach the children to play the guitar so that they might provide music during Eucharistic celebrations within the parish. This quickly expanded to a string orchestra which continues to attract children and young people from the surrounding areas of the parish.

The orchestra was named after Joseph De Piro, the founder of the Missionary Society of St Paul, the congregation to which Fr Joe belongs. The programme has now proudly developed into an incredibly talented youth orchestra. The group continues to develop with the increased initiation of new students into the music program. It is now a fully-fledged orchestra with over 60 musicians, six of whom have gone on to being offered fully-financed scholarships at universities in Manila.



The orchestra has allowed young children who would previously not have had any opportunities to access music teachers and tutoring as well as a broader education. These children have shown incredible resilience and determination in their dream to secure a better future, with many of them able to venture out of Bataan and secure scholarships to tertiary institutes in Manila.

Fr Joe's future vision for committed students with high potential is to enrol them into the London College of Music so that they are able to qualify and be accredited to be professional music teachers, and then to use their skills to teach those within the local barangay, and in neighbouring communities. His future hope is that the *Jose De Piro Katabaang Orkestra* ignites the expansion of learning within the community and inspires the Filipino government to continue funding the arts and education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the ability of the Foundation to provide educational material and opportunities to the students. Thomas Carr College, in association with St James the Apostle parish, intends to support the continuous



success of their music program. This money from the Social Action Funding Grant will contribute towards the provision of music tuition for disadvantaged and impoverished children and young people and the purchase of musical instruments.

We would like to thank the CaSPA Board for their generous donation which will assist in the further education of the young people we serve.

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