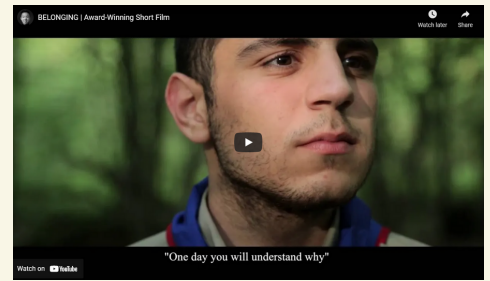




Growing and nurturing relationships for life



BELONGING

George is a young Syrian who struggled to find his identity as a child. After fleeing his country and coming to Paris, he finds a sense of belonging to a community that feels similar to his childhood memories as a scout.

See

- **What is happening?**

George, who has lived in many places, is seeking a place to belong. In the experience of tragedy and displacement, George comes to understand how he and others find a way to belong, through scouting and school.

- **Who are the people involved?**

Everyone, through the lens and reflections of George.

- **Who gains from this situation? Who loses?**

Any and every one who is excluded or forced to flee to a place that is foreign—initially loss and dislocation, but with resilience and courage, an opportunity found, to make a new home.

- **What is the situation doing to people?**

Many things; in the case of the international school, the melting pot of difference allows people to meet, to connect, to find a place they can belong.

- **Why is it happening? Why does it continue?**

Centuries of conflict see lives lost, people driven from their homelands, people struggling to find or make their identity.

Judge

- **How do you feel about this situation?**

As a parent/adult, I can be reflective and bring understanding from experience, and concerned when teenagers struggle to find their place, to be connected into a community.

- **Have you ever behaved or acted like anyone in the situation? If so, what happened? Why? How did you and/or those involved feel?**

As an adult, I can identify with the behaviour and experience. I have changed jobs, moved house, been a stranger, experienced acceptance and rejection from others, and know how difficult this can be.

- **What do you think should be happening?**

Can I strike a balance of support and care for my teenager, alongside understanding the facts of conflict, of injustice, of unfairness? Can I assist my teenager to be someone of empathy and compassion, someone who will embrace others that may be different?

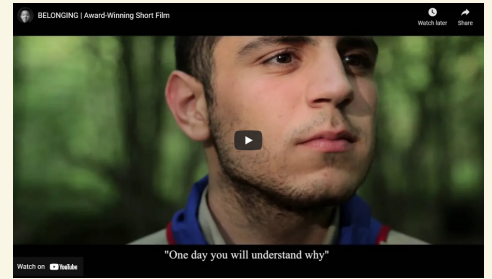
- **What does our faith say about it?**

'He asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10: 29-37)

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Act

- **What can we do to bridge the gap between what is happening (the reality) and what should be happening (the ideal/what our faith says)?**

Assist my teenager to navigate the ups and downs, the acceptance and rejection that comes with seeking community and a place to belong. Listen to them and offer unconditional love-encourage them to be and think like the Samaritan, someone who is caring, kind, responsive to those who are at risk. Explore whether there are options to be involved in supportive communities, including Parish youth groups.

The Catholic writer, philosopher and theologian G. K. Chesterton, observed that "men are homesick in their homes." While most of us have adequate shelter, we still live with a longing for 'home'. Maybe we long for home because you've moved around a lot; maybe we live far away from our family and crave to live near them, or they near us. Some people live with a longing for a home in which they feel safe and loved.

Sometimes life can feel like one long transition. It is good to make teenagers aware of change being part of life, that finding a place to belong is never permanent.

- **What action are we going to take?**
'We are little scouts in our hearts... We each have each other's backs (George)'. Model being compassionate and caring. Create a home of hospitality. Embrace others who are different... actions speak louder than words.
- **Who can we involve in our action?**
'It was us against the wild... You create this bond with people... It was all about brotherhood (George)'. Help my teenager to reflect on those, perhaps in their school, or the neighbourhood, who are new arrivals, or not obviously welcomed by others. How can you at school, or we at home, reach out to them? Parent/carers of my teenagers friends-try to be connected with them, know who they are... Together form the 'village' required to raise/form a child, a teenager, an adult...