

Christmas 2014 Newsletter

Dear Friends



We have just spent a week in Manvi and Pannur with a sixth form group from a school near Peterborough. Our first highlight was that we were present for the inauguration of the completed new building for Loyola Kapepaladi school, where 285 children attend. This school has been 3 years in the making and began with the inspiring vision of the Jesuit Fathers in 2010. An English couple sponsored the cost of purchasing 4 acres of land in 2011 and the dream of a new village school in Pannur started to become a reality.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Bishop and all the Fathers from the Mission, including Father Eric who co-founded the Mission in 2002 and whose dream it was to start a school here. It was a great honour to be asked to officially cut the ribbon, alongside the Bishop. The children performed many dances as well as a very moving narrated nativity that finished with one of them getting dressed up as Father Christmas and throwing sweets into the crowd.

Our second highlight was to share in the school's Christmas celebrations. With money sent specifically for this purpose, Father Francis bought lots of Christmas presents which we collected from two different shops in Manvi one morning. The Oundle sixth form students agreed to help distribute the gifts and the first to be given out was a piece of cake. But this wasn't an ordinary piece of cake; it was the most enormous piece of cake the children had ever seen! Some of them even asked Sister Ida what they should do with it which made her laugh so much. She told them "eat it, eat it!"



The children were also given an exercise book, a pencil, rubber, ruler and pencil sharpener. The younger ones had a new slate whilst the older ones had a geometry set. They were all so happy! Sister Ida said that they wouldn't sleep that night as they were so excited.



It was a very moving experience to see these children so happy with such simple gifts. Being in Pannur has given Christmas a very special feel. It is refreshing to be away from the commercialization of Christmas that takes away from the simplicity of the baby Jesus born in a manger. The Pannur children don't have any concept of the material world.



The sixth formers from Oundle school near Peterborough were wonderful with all the children they met whether in the villages or in the schools, completely willing at all times to lend a hand. And needless to say that the Pannur children absolutely loved being with their older guests.

It was a privilege to be part of this group and to listen to their thoughts both during and after their first visit to the Mission. Many of them don't know quite how they are going to explain their time in Pannur to their families as they have never experienced anything like it before.

So, in these last few days before Christmas, we wish you a blessed Christmas and a healthy and peaceful 2015. Thank you so much once again for all your support during this year.

God bless, and very best wishes
Dinah and Peter

p.s. for anybody involved in the knitting and blanket project, we will be giving these out in January when we return on the 12th, and more news will follow then

p.p.s if anybody would like to find out more about sponsoring one of the children at Loyola Kapepaladi school in Pannur, please do get in touch