



The Newsletter of the
Guyana Region of the
Society of Jesus
December 2009

Guyjest



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Birthday Wishes

04/12 - Xavier Rajan

09/12 - Barrow Robert

New Babe

New Life

New Enthusiasm

New Zeal

In the New Year

2010

ADVENT GIVING

Celtic spirituality distinguishes different *types* of martyr: a red martyr is someone who sheds his-or-her blood for Christ; a green martyr is one who leaves house & home and goes to the woods or mountains to give themselves to Christ through study and contemplation; whereas a white martyr is one who leaves his homeland and (following the white morning clouds) sets sail for a foreign land to give their life for Christ.

December begins with the celebration of two formidable Jesuit martyrs: the red martyr of Edmund Campion on 1st December and the white martyr of Francis Xavier on the 3rd December.

When Campion came screaming into the world in 1540, Xavier was still in Rome in his short-lived period as the most incompetent Secretary of the Society in the history of the Jesuits (*in this role he inadvertently became an inspiration for all struggling Socii since that time!*) so although they never met in this world, they shared many things because the experience of the Spiritual Exercises instilled in both men the generous desire to give everything to God.

Advent was the time when they were finally called to give all. At 46 years of age, stripped of family, friends & familiar surroundings, Francis died of fever off the coast of China, burned-out, prematurely grey & murmuring half-forgotten phrases in Basque to a dodgy Chinese catechist. At the age of 41, tortured and physically broken, Campion stood on a scaffold, at a cross-roads outside London on a cold wintry English morning - close to home, yet stripped of his clothes, his dignity and contemplating his extinction before a raucous mob baying for his traitorous blood.

Although their lives were short, their legacies are great because of the quality of their giving. We ask their prayers as we try to purify our own self-giving in this Advent period.

Dermot Preston SJ

SENT ON A MISSION AT THE SERVICE OF THE LORD - KARASABAI

The mountain castled village of Karasabai has never been so grateful with **Fr Paul Martin** and **Sch Ryan D'Souza** living with them now. The resident presence has certainly added life into the believing community and a renewed vigour is evident in their celebrations and their own initiatives. The Gospel-sharing communities which were energized by the seminar in the month of August have been a real blessing in bringing the faith alive. The parish team and the believing community together has come forward to make benches for the Church, shelves for the library and the Youth Center and a brand new structure for the presbytery. Bishop Francis Alleyne and **Fr Dermot's** visit to the South Pakaraimas



Sch. Ryan sharing lighter moments with Amerindians

(our mission territory) was a time of grace. Bishop Francis blessed the new church in Pai Pang and the Chapel in Jawari as he made his way to Lethem for the centenary celebrations. He baptized 6 children and confirmed 4 adults while he was in Karasabai. The pilgrims from North Pakaraimas joined us on our way down to Lethem and the presence of our Bishop on this pilgrimage was indeed an uplifting spiritual experience of the shepherd leading his sheep by example.

As for the Jesuit community, Fr Paul has been always an inspiration for everyone around. His unwavering commitment to shepherding the faithful in the different villages has been evident in the admiration people have for him. Sch Ryan accompanied him there is doing his bit as a much-needed companion. He helps out in the school and in the parish, and while Paul is away, he has become the continuing presence of the Jesuits. The Moral Education Initiative in the School, along with representatives from the other denominations make one compact team, has been very effective. It has not only helped us in teaching moral values to our younger generation but also looks to building-bridges between different churches.

FR KURU REPORTS FROM BERBICE

Fr Tony and I have been stoically sorting it out all. Tony would care for the flocks in Port Mourant and Alness. I would venture into areas like Springlands, Black Bush Polder and the ideal of Siparuta. Siparuta is cut off geographically with our disabled boat on the dry-dock awaiting a river worthy replacement. Our dear old Derrick Maitland was so regular in his boat peregrinations to this apparently out of reach geographical spot on the face of the earth. There is still hope against ruta was by Fr Tony on 21st of May 2009. as they are, spent their useful time with the youthful scholastics were **Britto, Ryan** and In the meantime we have been waiting for The rest of the priestly ministry runs Tony. There was a combined community Corentyne (beyond Port Mourant) on 25th for SVP.



Fr Derrick Maitland

hope. The last priestly ministry visit to Sipa- Then the scholastics, young and adventurous flock at Siparuta on 8th August. The daring **Edwin.**

the arrival of the Reverend Doctor **Gilbert.** smoothly on its course as designed by Fr celebration of the liturgy by the people of the October. It was also celebrated as a fun(d) day

NEWS GALORE FROM PLAISANCE

The month in Plaisance started with the liturgical celebration of all saints and souls. After practising the faith in communion of saints, it was the solidarity with the Amerindians in Rupununi that sequenced the events of the month. We had 9 parishioners from Plaisance who joined the pilgrimage to Lethem. On their return journey, the participants expressed unanimously that the pilgrimage had renewed them spiritually and refreshed them physically.

Fr. Edwin Thadheu, S.J. joined the Plaisance parish community on the 9th of November after putting an end to his nomadic life in Guyana. It took almost a fortnight for him to learn the pastoral proceedings in the 6 parish community. Since **Fr. James Gonsalves, S.J.** left for India on home visit on the 13th November, the baton of activities was handed over to Fr. Edwin. Besides the regular masses, the activities undertaken are the Confirmation classes in Victoria and Enmore, Rite of Christian Initia-

tion of Adults (RCIA) in Plaisance etc. Accompanying various piety groups in their spiritual journey adds to his pastoral experience. After a month of intensive pastoral involvement, Fr. Edwin accredits **Fr. Bob Barrow, S.J.** with five stars as he accompanies him in the pastoral ministry, teaching him the pastoral nuances he has gained through the decades. Thank you Fr. Bob.

On the 21st the Big Boys and Girls (above 60yrs) had an evening get together in which they shared not only

home-made snacks but also their joy through indoor games. As the nation is busy with LCD strategies, the faithful of the parish took an initiative to distribute environmental-friendly bags to create eco-awareness among the parishioners.

The catholic congregation of Victoria conducted their yearly fair. It could be described as simple and community oriented. Bringing people together in a common cause was the attitude the organizers displayed throughout planning and executing the annual event.



The parish youth at work

UNION OF HEARTS AND MINDS - REGENTS' MEETING



The three regents **Schs Edwin, Britto and Ryan** from the Interiors descended upon Georgetown to join their fourth pillar **Sch Wilson** in the city at the nick of time. Though the meeting was just for a day, it provided enough time and space to share each other's experiences and reflect upon it while returning to our original charism. **Fr Dermot** initiated us into the half day of prayer and reflection. **Fr Paul Martin** then led us through both a reflection on Fr Kolvenbach's letter on regency and facilitated the sharing afterwards. The time which we spent sharing our own joys and struggles in our regency places helped us understand each other and pledge our support to each other. A few concrete suggestions as to make the years of regency more fruitful and the spiritual, emotional care of the regent in the communities, given the physical hurdles, were taken into consideration for further implementation. We spent our evening at Plaisance parish enjoying each other's company with a shared meal with **Fr Edwin** and **Fr Bob**. It was unanimously suggested that the next meeting should be in the Interior location.

RUPUNUNI JESUIT MISSION CELEBRATES CENTENARY

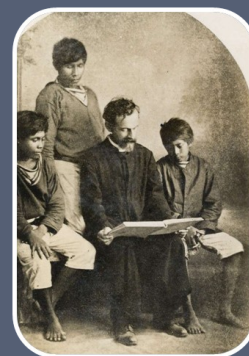


The centenary celebrations of the founding of the Jesuit mission in Rupununi brought back the spirit of the pioneer missionary Fr Cuthbert Cary Elwes. The nearly 1000 of faithful from Georgetown, the capital, and North and South Rupununi, joined by Georgetown Bishop Francis Alleyne OSB, the Bishop of Boa Vista from Brazil, the British Provincial **Fr Michael Holman** and the Assistant for

Western Europe, **Fr Antoine Kerhuel** from the General's Curia in Rome stood witness to the universality of the Church, active interest in the Missions and concern for the Amerindian people.

The beginnings of the Jesuit mission in the then British Guyana undertaken by the British Province go back to 1857. Fr Cary-Elwes established the Rupununi mission in 1909. As the Provincial recalled in his homily in the concelebrated Centenary Mass on 8 Nov, the main reason why missionaries left their homes thousands of miles away and travelled to an undeveloped area like Rupununi, weathering many a hardship, was that people must come to know and experience the living God. No wonder today there is a large number of Catholics in the Rupununi and Pakaraimas, centred on more than 50 village churches. The energetic singing and dancing during the Mass added local colour and deep significance to the celebration. Bishop Francis wore a mitre decorated with brightly coloured bird-feathers. The bishop paid glorious tributes to Fr Cary-Elwes and other Jesuit missionaries who had to master many languages, travel miles and miles on foot or horseback or by boat or jeep, face loneliness and disease and be content with primitive means of communication.

The St Ignatius *benab* was the venue of a three-hour long cultural show the previous day – with dances in local costumes and colour accompanied by joyful songs by young and old.



“ it was Cary-Elwes' prayerfulness that attracted people - alongside his gentleness, his zeal for souls and love for the Indians. He mastered Makushi - one of the most difficult languages of the region - after eight of nine years in the interior and used to sit late into the night surrounded by men, women and children instructing them, or talking or singing with them”

Ged Clapson (in J&F)

“GIVE ME SOULS AND TAKE AWAY THE REST”

Deacon **Ronald Fernandes** will be ordained by Rt Rev. Dr Derek Fernandes, the Bishop of Karwar, Karnataka, India on Tuesday, 8 December 2009.

Through his preaching, administration of sacraments, service to the poor and good example, may his priestly ministry lead many Guyanese close to the presence of Christ. We pray that he might be ‘a fire kindling other fires’.

FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD

**YOU
ARE A PRIEST
FOREVER**

Priestly Ordination
8 December 2009
First Thanksgiving Eucharist
9 December 2009
Ronald Fernandes SJ

PONDERINGS FROM PARAMAKATOI - PETER & PAULINE

We have perused PK for more than a month now but we are still struggling to understand the strange mix that is in this large village in the North Pakaraimas. We have been generously allocated one of the teachers' flats and we overlook the airstrip and, beyond that, the windmill which we thought powered the water supply. Sadly the main shaft is broken and more modern solar panels are actually the power source. The Primary and Secondary schools are behind us and can be reached in 5 minutes but we have to allow more time if it is wet and slippery underfoot. Both schools have a kitchen garden through which we pass but due to the presence of local ants, the gardens are not maintained.

The Secondary school is bulging at the seams with 582 children and I now on a shift system to enable them to support 18 classes in 10 classrooms. It is hoped that the parents from all the villages will complete the hard work of making furni-

ture and all the borrowed buildings turned into classrooms.

The dormitories are also overcrowded as the new dorm building remains unfinished, unfurnished and unlit. All 314 children are therefore squeezed into the remaining 2 dorm buildings and meals have to be staggered, as the dining hall can only seat 100, at best. The Matron juggles her supplies, staff and wood to provide hot meals (but regularly runs out of flour!) and meat is a treat.

In spite of all these trials the children are keen to play football, cricket and volleyball as well as read but sports equipment is in short supply and library lending limited to a few American paperbacks. All these children are doing their own washing, cleaning the dorms, helping in the kitchen and doing their studies in the half-light of the dining hall. They consider themselves lucky to have the chance to attend secondary school and their parents make all

sorts of sacrifices to give their kids a better start in life.

I am humbled by the generosity shown to us by the villagers. We have been given bananas by the score, bread, jam, cakes, biscuits, other fruits and vegetables to supplement our diet of rice, lentils and tinned food. We have only seen about a fifth of this large village; some sections are over an hour's walk away and the children are supposed to be there by 7.45am. Let's hope they are back to normal hours and so will not have to be there until 8.45am, especially with the rainy season approaching.

We hope to spend more time with the dorm kids and we might do some teaching in the evening to help the villagers as well as those taking exams. The air is pleasantly cool and fresh by comparison with Georgetown but still walking to the creek to do my washing takes its toll on my energy. We both need time to adapt to a 6am start, 11pm finish and no electrical washing machines, fridges or microwaves. There is some electricity between 6 and 10 pm; mainly to power lights for studying. This is a large Amerindian village with the Secondary school as a challenging microcosm of Guyanese culture in the middle. If we can adapt ourselves, maybe we will be able to help. But our challenge in the next 3 months will be to try and blend in with our environment. Watch this space for our next installment.



Parents from all villages bringing their children to PK

WE MOVE MOUNTAINS - KURUKUBARU MUSINGS

After having celebrated the All Saints Day feast mass around 11.30, we pilgrims from Kurukubaru began our long journey towards Lethem. Initially we were just 8 members including **Fr. Poulose Vellakada** and I (**Sch. Britto**) but eventually our numbers started to multiply. It took 4-&-a-half hours to reach Kato, our neighbouring village. The next morning, after a short prayer, 22 of us began our long journey towards Tusening, it took about six-&-a-half hours to reach that place. It was a hard and tiring day. We had evening mass as it was All Souls Day. We took to our beds early as we knew that the hardest part would be the journey would be the following day to Yurong Paru, and this proved to be correct as it took almost 9 hours to reach that village.

We had mass in the evening and again the next morning. Since we had almost completely burnt-out all our energies, we took a day off and delightfully enjoyed the hospitality of the people. We felt honored as they just killed a fatted-cow for our sake!!! It was indeed, a much-

relished meal.

On 5th of Nov our numbers swelled to 52 as we started on our journey to Karasabai, but this time we had a truck to ferry us across the south Pakaraimas. It was a very rough and bumpy journey which made us wonder whether walking would actually have been better!!!! It took us about 6 hours to reach our destination. By the time we reached there, we were like hungry wolves but all our hunger disappeared when we saw His Lordship Francis Alleyne and **Fr. Dermot Preston** together with the residents **Fr. Paul Martin** and **Sch. Ryan D'Souza** ready to welcome us with out-stretched arms.

The following day we were 2 truckloads and a tractorful of pilgrims to continue our journey towards Lethem.

Now in early December, **Fr Gabriel** has started his work of going around northern villages saying Christmas masses. He has already covered 6 villages which took him about 9 days of walking!!! Despite having problems with his legs he is doing his best for the flock he shepherds. Let's support him with our prayers.

JESUIT PRESBYTERY TO ARRUPE HOUSE

As given in the regional update, life in the new Arrupe house is settling down to a more spacious accommodation and with greater facilities. We thank **Fr Dermot** and his team who saw to minute details of shifting the house. We are still working out some final touches. In this new scenario **Fr Malcolm** stands as solid as a Kaieteur rock in the swirling waters of his varied apostolates. **Fr Harold Wong** is settling down slowly and steadily after setting his foot into the new environment.

We were privileged to have the presence of **Fr Antoine Kerhuel**, Fr General's Assistant for Western Europe and Fr Provincial, **Fr Michael Holman**, for the centenary celebration of our work in the interiors.

Congratulations to **Fr Rajan** who steered his maiden TV programme through the Catholic Magazine on the subject of the newly-canonized Saint Damien of Molokai.

While **Fr Anil Tirkey** is away in India, **Sch. Wilson** has bravely stepped into his shoes as Minister of the House. Recently he was given charge of a group of Legionaries of Mary from Georgetown for a day of recollection in Kitty. It was well-attended and the feedback received was positive.

Brother Epifanio and his team excel in catering to the spiritual needs of Brazilians who live in Guyana. He continues his studies in English until January 2010. In the Guyana Karate College, **Fr Compton** welcomed overseas examiners. Exams took place in 4 Dojos with crowds of youths and parents from many counties. Our many congratulations to him as he was re-elected secretary at the Annual General Meeting.



It's a joy to be with Holman