

Christmas 2003

PREM DAN

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Dear Friends,

With Christmas just a month away, we can reflect on an Anthology by Sr. Marie Coutinho,mcj - *Is It Christmas?*

*Mother earth heaves with aching humanity
perched on her breast.*

*Her bones twitch with explosions that rent
the air with fire and soundless screams.*

She is wounded to the core.

*Human kind writhes in pain. Swirling
darkness encompasses all. Today is not
better than yesterday. The long night has
come to stay.*

*Buried in the bosom of a seething earth are
bodies torn as under by utter brutality.*

And yet all is not lost!



*From the emptiness
of a shattered womb
emerges LIFE
heralding the new
millennium of hope, justice and peace.
It is Christmas for all who believe.*



Yes indeed, it is Christmas for all who believe in the power of love, joy, peace, harmony and justice. May this love, peace and joy of Christmas be ever in your heart; and may the loving warmth it brings remain with you each day of the New Year 2004.

We had quite a few activities for our children in the last 4 months:

- On July 4, Namita Gokal, an ex-student of Cathedral High School distributed raincoats to the primary children coming for the evening study classes.
- July, being literacy month, the Rotaract Youth Club of Bombay Hills South conducted 4 sessions on story-telling and art for the Garden school children from 1.15 to 2.30 p.m. On the last day they distributed books and pencils to the children.
- To celebrate their school feast in a meaningful way, the girls of Std 9 of St. Anne's High School organized an afternoon of fun and games in their school auditorium on July 26, 2003. They gave the children delicious snacks. The class of Std 9, also take it in turns to come daily to teach the study class children of Std 2.
- Parents Day was celebrated at Prem Dan Social Service Centre on July 27, 2003 with a lively cultural programme which was highly appreciated by all.
- On August 12, 2003, the AICUF unit of St. Xavier's College interacted with the study class children. They took keen interest in knowing about the activities of Garden school and volunteered to help out in various ways. They also conducted an evening of value based games for our children at Kharghar Boarding on September 14, 2003 to celebrate the girl-child week.
- On August 27, the students of Wilson College as part of their Sociology course in the Bachelors of Mass Media presented a short story to the tuition class children of Standards 4 and 5. The aim was to encourage the art of "Story Telling", one of the oldest ways of cultural transmission in Society.

- On August 28, 2003, a meeting on Health Care and Education was organized for the parents of our three kindergartens at St. Anne's High School Auditorium. Most of the parents were present. Dr. Pratibha Doshi briefed the parents on Health Care and Hygiene. She also visits the Garden School every Friday to examine the children. Dr. Vibha Krishnamurthy spoke on the role of Education, Successful parenting and ways of dealing with difficult and problematic children.
- Teacher's Day was celebrated in a unique way with a Thanksgiving service and High Tea for our teachers on September 4 and a picnic to Alibagh on September 5, 2003.
- On October 2, 2003, our sponsors Richard and Bibiana Pereira from Muscat collected old stuff from their friends and then sold it at the flea market. They sent the entire proceeds to Prem Dan. They are also organizing a Charity Car Wash on the 20th & 21st of November. We are very grateful to them for all the fund-raising work carried out.
- The Lions and Lionesses of Cuffe Parade met at the Garden School on October 8, 2003 to donate Art and Craft material for the children. They also brought picture charts, hand-made posters, snacks and other useful items.
- Ms. Judith Moore on behalf of Aquinas College, Stockport, UK visited Garden School on October 14, 2003 to discuss the viability of a link between Aquinas College and Prem Dan. During her short stay in Mumbai she interacted with the Staff and children of Garden School, Geeta Nagar and Reay Road schools. She also made 2 trips to the Boarding at Kharghar and spent time with the Staff and children. Aquinas College has already taken up the sponsorship of 2 school and 2 College going children and hope to continue to raise funds for Prem Dan. We were very happy to have Judith spend time with us and are grateful for this link with Aquinas College. We are sure it will be a fruitful experience for both.
- School closed for the Diwali Vacation on October 20, 2003 and re-opened on November 10, 2003. Most of the children went to their native places to celebrate Diwali, festival of light, with their relatives and friends.
- We are grateful to the Manager & Staff of HSBC (Hongkong Bank) for the valuable and useful gifts donated on the occasion of Diwali.
- We are always happy to have benefactors and sponsors stop by to visit us and the children. Thanks to Mr. Thomas Feix a number of Lufthansa Crew drop in with useful gifts for the children. Some of the Alitalia Crew continue to visit and bring gifts.
- We were happy to have Mr. Jurgen Feix, our dear Uncle J from Germany on October 31, 2003. It was a happy co-incidence that a German musical group playing at the October Fest in Mumbai visited the Garden school the same morning. They got a good opportunity to get information from Uncle J in their own familiar language. The group also visited our Reay Road school and were touched by what they saw there.
- From 2nd November to 7th November, 10 of our homeless children accompanied by Ms. Annice Monteiro enjoyed a wonderful Camp organized by the YMCA at Nilshi Camp Lakeside, 150 kms from Mumbai. At an altitude of 3500 feet, Camp Lakeside is surrounded by the beautiful Lake Gibbs, hemmed in by the Nethersole dam.
- Children's Day was celebrated on November 14, 2003. The teachers put up an item and conducted games for the children. Goodies were then distributed to all the children.
- On November 19, 2003, the Staff and students of Std 1 of Fort Convent took our garden school children for an outing to Colaba Woods. They gave the children snacks and useful gifts.

Wishing you and your families

A Happy Christmas and A Peace-filled New Year 2004.

Yours gratefully in Jesus and Mary,



Sr. Felicity Morris & Sr. Patricia Santos