

SOCIETY OF JESUS



GUYANA REGION

GUYJEST

*The Newsletter of Guyana Region
of the Society of Jesus
November 2008*

Commemoration of the 150 years of Jesuit Presence in Guyana with the release of Three Jesuit Stamps during “Carifesta X – 2008”



Sacred Heart Church



Fr Cuthbert Cary-Elwes
S.J.



St Stanislaus College



“What inspires and impels us, is the Gospel and the Spirit of Christ: if the Lord Jesus was not at the centre of our life we would have no sense of our apostolic activity, we would have no reason for our existence. It is from the Lord Jesus we learn to be near to the poor and suffering, to those who are excluded in this world.”

Fr.General Adolfo Nicolás, S.J.
to the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, February 21, 2008.

THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR SPEAKS.....

Just a quick note to say that I am now back in Georgetown, having had an enlightening excursion to the Guyanese interior and then into Brazil.

- The 8 day PLA Seminar in Lethem was for the central and north Rupununi and its major topic was Marriage and Baptism. It seemed to go well although there is still a lot to be done. With thanks to Joaquim and Clyde for their hospitality and to UK candidate, Oliver Murphy who attended and assisted.
- The CPAL (Latin American Provincials) conference in Manaus was an experience: Fr Adolpho was there and was charmingly engaging. Although formally not part of the group, Guyana (Malcolm and myself), Jamaica (Peter McIsaac and Chris Llannos) and Haiti (the MagNov and the French Canadian Provincial) had something of an 'observer status' as - in different ways - we interface with various parts of the CPAL kingdom.
- At the end of the conference I carried on south, over the Amazon to the South Brazil Province, (steered in an expert fashion by the BRM Provincial through the various pitfalls of luggage-tagging and a tight exchange of planes in Brazilia) to San Leopoldo where Br Medino is presently putting down roots into a degree in Pedagogy in the Jesuit University of Unisinos, which is 10 minutes walk away from the community. Medino is appreciating the various experiences and is appreciated by the community and the Province. He sends fond best wishes to the Region!
- On my way back I landed in Boa Vista at the ungodly hour of 1.30am but was still intercepted at the airport by Vanildo of the Amazonia Province and slept the night in the old Benedictine community house and thus got to meet the Bishop of Roraima at breakfast before heading off on the two hour bus journey to Bon Fim and then back across the border (on foot!) to Lethem.
- After 10 days PLA Seminar on the hill in Kurukabaru, I find myself back in Georgetown and (to the jubilation of the local mosquitoes) chained to my desk - more or less - for the next couple of weeks. For the latter half of November I will be in Aishalton for the last of the autumn PLA seminars.

Among recent arrivals, a special welcome to **Fr Ranjit, Provincial of the Ranchi Province**, who is here to see Anil, Amar and something of the Region; and he was bringing with him **Gabriel Xess** to join our ranks. Also greetings to **Gilbert Camillus** of the Madurai Province who arrived last week. We also warmly welcome **Fr Jossy Rodrigues**, Socius to the Provincial in Karnataka, who is seeing the Region and members of the KAR province during his 10 days in the country and then a few days in Barbados. Give them all warm handshakes when you meet them along the road.

REGENTS

Clyde Muropa (ZIM) – St Ignatius Lethem

Jerri M Dias (KAR) – Aishalton

Ramesh Vanan (KAR) – St Pius X Parish, Georgetown

Edwin Anthony (KAR) – Guyana Human Development Centre, Berbice

Gilbert Banda (ZIM) – Jesuit presbytery, Brickdam

Britto Arockiam (MDU) – Jesuit presbytery, Brickdam

Rayan D'Souza (KAR) – Jesuit Presbytery, Brickdam

We welcome the new members of the region...

Edwin Anthony (KAR)

Rayan D'Souza (KAR)

Britto Arockiam (MDU)

Fr Simon Bishop (BRI) – for three months

Fr Gilbert Camillus (MDU)

Fr Gabriel Xess (RAN)

SOCIETY OF JESUS



GUYANA REGION

REGIONAL MEETING

Dates: 6&7 January (2 FULL-DAYS)

Arrivals evening of 5th; Departures on morning of 8th

Place: Brickdam

Main Topic: GC35 and Guyana

Summer Programmes

1. Down the Corentyne...

True to the Ignatian '*men sent on mission*', the five scholastics were sent to the Corentyne. Along with Fr Tony D'Souza SJ, they spread themselves into three teams: **Sch Britto Arockiam with Fr D'Souza** at Berbice, **Schs Jerry Dias and Clyde Muropa** at Springlands and **Schs Raphael Gonsalves and Rayan D'Souza** camping at Siparuta.

Berbice: Port Mourant Parish & Guyana Human Development Centre

Fr D'Souza and Sch Britto facilitated the Bible Discovery and Leadership camp at the Port Mourant Parish for the Catholics, while also meticulously carrying out the parallel Self-Discovery and the Human Development Programme at the Centre for the youth of other faiths. With the help of lay staff, they steered the programme into an amazing experience for the young people who took active part in it.

Springlands Parish

Schs Jerry and Clyde, teamed up to conduct a week-long leadership and personality Development Programme iced with Bible classes at the Springlands Parish for the children and the youth. Apart from this, they made it point to visit the families of the Parish in the evenings which was appreciated so well, that the moved parishioners could not let them return after the programme.

Siparuta (Amerindian Settlement)

Schs Raphael and Rayan, went further down the Corentyne coast into the interiors, to the Amerindian village of Siparuta. They spent the week visiting the families of the people, sending a ray of revival of catholic faith in the village. It was challenging and adventurous yet thrilling and deeply moving experience, as they limed along with the young and the old, becoming one with their way of living and sharing with them the simple joys of life. **Fr Malcolm Rodrigues SJ** officiated the Eucharistic Celebration during which 6 children were baptized and 6 were given the sacrament of Confirmation.

2. Quo Vadis?

In early July 2007 we were fortunate to have a large group of Jesuit residents and visitors, so to capitalise on this temporary spiritual enrichment, we decided to experiment with a Mission Retreat based at the Cathedral in central Georgetown. Our theme was "To Be a Pilgrim..." We were looking on it as something of a pilot scheme, but as the whole event went so well, we decided to try something similar this year.

In early July 2008 we planned a repeat performance with a different cast: our 2008 theme took up the pilgrim motif and was entitled "Quo Vadis?". We announced it as a time of prayer and reflection for those discerning God's call in their life; we put an advert in the Catholic press and dispatched the

brethren to announce the programme at all of the masses in the city on the Sunday immediately before the retreat.

As with the 2007 programme there were two distinct prongs of this Mission:

- (1) **A Week of Guided Prayer in Daily Life (for pre-arranged volunteers)**
- (2) **An evening Mission-Eucharist (open to all).**

This year we doubled the number of pilgrims being guided and thus had 10 Jesuit priests & scholastics accompanying **40 pilgrim souls in their prayer – the oldest was in her late 70's and the youngest was an enthusiastic young man of 12!**

For the individual retreat, the pilgrims were expected to continue their normal lives but to try to build some time for prayer into their daily routine. Their retreat began with an Orientation Meeting on the Sunday evening, and then from Monday to Friday for 30 minutes each day, the pilgrim met their appointed guide at a time & place suitable to both. On the Saturday evening at the end of the week we gathered them for a "Evaluation" Meeting to review how the retreat had gone.

The evening Eucharists(which ran from Monday to Friday) drew around 200 people each night. As well as the overarching "QV?" theme and the scriptures of the day, each night was dedicated to one of the five points of the Examen – thus the designated preacher that night had plenty of themes to choose from! A hymn-sheet was given-out each evening and this carried some reflection, poem or artwork on the theme which could be used by people to assist their meditations. After communion each night we recited together the Thomas Merton pilgrim prayer. It was fitting that the Bishop of Georgetown (Francis Alleyne OSB) could celebrate our final liturgy on the Feast of St Benedict.

To put the final touches to the whole event, we organized the showing of the 1955 Hollywood classic movie "Quo Vadis?" After 2 ½ hours of Romans, Christians & Lions, the remaining hardy pilgrims all were agreed: Deborah Kerr (as the beautiful young heroine) had been so wonderfully radiant, and Peter Ustinov (as the emperor Nero) had been so wonderfully mad!

3. Little St Pauls in Lethem...

When I heard that I would be going to the interiors along with Scholastics **Ramesh and Gilbert** I was very happy. Although it was a difficult journey, there was a sigh of relief when we saw **Fr. Kuru** waiting to receive us with a broad smile in Lethem. As soon as I reached St. Ignatius parish I said "thank God I am here at last".

Fr. Kuru and Fr. Joachim had already drawn up a two weeks programme. Since the Pope has announced this year "Pauline Year", our main task was to go to different villages showing the movie "St. Paul the Apostle". It was an adventurous experience because we had to travel through

humpy-bumpy roads. Sometimes the roads were so bad that we had to travel through the unbeaten paths. Thanks to Ivan the driver without whose help it would have been difficult for us to go to the villages and meet the people. Como, Mocomoco, Haiawa, Lethem, St. Ignatius, Shulinab, Pariquarnau, these were some of the villages that we visited. These villages have no electricity so we had to take with us the generator and all the other necessary things to show the movie. I felt it was a great opportunity for us to tell people about St. Paul and how he spread the Good News to the Jews and the Gentiles. I remember when we asked the children who St. Paul was; one of them got up and said "Jesus". I am sure the movie has helped those people who do not know much about him.

I was amazed at the great faith of those simple people. Once we stayed in a village called Shulinab for a couple of days. As soon as we reached the place two old ladies, both lay ministers (known as PLAs – Parish Lay Assistants) came to us and the first thing they asked us was "can you brothers conduct service for us"? The attitude and the desire for God of these people touched me. I also learnt another great lesson 'to be happy with whatever we have'. People in the villages had no electricity, no television, no DVD players, no computers and internet yet there was a smile on their face. This challenged my own way of living.

Apart from showing movies, under the guidance of Sch. Ramesh we were able to prepare a documentary on St. Ignatius Lethem. This documentary includes the way we worked with the people in those two weeks. Since I know to play the guitar Fr. Joachim asked me to teach the parish children. I was very happy to do so. I enjoyed teaching the basic guitar lessons. This was very well appreciated by the parents. It was a delight to interact with the children. We also took turns to preach in the parish.

As I look back, I see that people are in need of priests who can assist them in their faith. But the only thought rolls in my heart is that "the harvest is plenty but labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37).

- Edwin Anthony SJ

4. East Coast Leadership course 'roars' into life

After having a taste of the newly promulgated documents of GC 35, a Youth Ministry team was dispatched to the East Coast for a leadership course at the invitation of **Fr. James**, parish priest of Plaisance. It was time for serious men to do serious work in a fashionably relaxed atmosphere.

'Romantic' **Rayan**, importing his wisdom 'duty free' from Lawrence Kohlberg, enabled the participants to enter into their sub-conscience, to realize who they are and who they are not, through building and boasting their self-esteem. He managed to let participants pause for a while and mark the untravelled way employing the Johari's window approach. By the close of the five day long workshop, many young people had crawled out of their shells and were as exorbitantly noisy as the intersection of Brickdam and Camp streets. The liturgically talented 'Jovial' **Jerri** sounded like a motorboat, handling leadership traits and budgeting. He steered the ship to dock with the initially introduced teen movie on peer pressure. This led to a discussion that saw realia being used as an instrument of instruction. Family and social issues became the hot

potatoes that he had to glove-handle diligently, letting the participants steam it off from experience. 'Curious' **Clyde**, whose loquacity was at full throttle like that of a double barreled machine gun focused on leadership styles, planning a meeting, human resources management and duties of office bearers. 'Rapping' **Raphael** sent hearts whispering with his rapping ability that kept feeble bodied persons awake. He is remarkably remembered for his eloquence not only in street lingo, but his ability to rope in men from the Rehab centre to discuss drugs, how not to begin, and how to get out of an addiction and on the dangers of drugs. He as well sampled the skills on communication and correct language usage for the functionality of an organization.

Warming the reserve bench was the able mouthed guitarist, Elijah from Pleasance parish and of course the parish priest, James who attended not as a delegate but as an observer, with 'no voting powers'. James technically furnished the 'auditorium' that was used, equipped departmentally the corners used for group discussions and organized the delicious snacks that created a welcome break from the discussions throughout the morning.

Like Ezekiel's dry bones in the valley, the ligaments of the scattered thoughts and actions of the foursome, ended with completed models of leaders, whose service and execution of duty, would be witnessed soon in their parishes.

-Clyde SJ

5. Sacred Space in Eight Days

God is always present in us and in our midst, but the noise in the world clogs our hearts from listening to his voice which is silent and gentle. The noise in the world does not only have to do with the hustle and bustle at a traffic jam or people shouting at us. In most cases it has to do with our daily busy schedule and targets which are often burdensome and our daily regimen which always makes us perceive life as monotonous and pointless. All these types of noise among many others numbs the heart. However, the only remedy is to find a sacred space which invigorates the heart. According to most spiritual gurus, we need to acquire or claim this space by removing ourselves from the noise which deadens us and often makes us see God as a distant and passive figure. No wonder, after a busy and eventful year in the schools and various ministries, it is an Ignatian tradition that Jesuits should rekindle their hearts with that fire which was part of their initial call to serve Christ.

From the 13th to the 22nd of July Jesuit Scholastics, **Jerry Dias SJ, Clyde Muroa SJ, Ramesh Vanan SJ and myself** enjoyed our sacred space in the confines of the newly constructed and pleasant St Paul's retreat centre in Better Hope, on the East Coast. After completing one year in Guyana and after exhausting our voices in the classrooms, we certainly needed some time to ourselves. Having other members of the clergy, from other religious congregations and devoted laypersons joining us has become a tradition within these annual retreats. In my view it is a testimony that the Ignatian model of retreat has carved an important niche within the Church's spiritual fabric. This year, we were joined by two diocesan priests, five sisters from the Mercy, Ursuline and

Carmelite of the Corpus Christi religious congregations, and three devoted laypersons.

I have come to observe that as I progress in my journey as a Jesuit every retreat is better than the previous. I do not have a clear answer to that, but I have developed two hypotheses for that. The first is that it is likely that my skills of listening are sharpened as I progress. The second is that it may be likely that God makes the directors more skilful as I become more sophisticated. Probably both hypotheses are valid - who knows?

Fr. Christopher Llanos SJ directed the scholastics and two other members. For those who do not know Chris, he is a Jesuit originally from Trinidad, but has served most of his Jesuit life in Jamaica. He is currently the novice master and treasurer to the Jamaican region. Fr. Bob Barrow SJ directed the other part of the group. We thank God for inspiring these hugely talented directors.

By the time the retreat came to an end, we had all naturalized ourselves in this Sacred space. Indeed, God's voice is silent and gentle.

- **Gilbert Fungai Banda SJ**

Ronald Fernandes and Marlon Innis from London

Ronald Fernandes and Marlon Innis were part of a group of nine Jesuits scholastics that participated in this year Arrupe Month 8th July – 2nd August, which took place in Valladolid, Spain. The location was the English College. The English College was set up to train priests during the difficult time when it was impossible to do so in England, in order to return priests, who would have continued to administer to the people of England despite the great risks if and when caught. It was good to return to an institution which was set up by the Society and is still rich, with the proud history of the Society, for such an important stage of our formation.

The programme allowed for listening to each other as we recounted our vocation story. Discussion sessions were held on aspects of the General Congregation that relates to the priestly ministry and the requirements for this stage. Other sessions were held on the Society's way of proceeding in relation to mission. Visits were made to Salamanca, and Madrid. While in Salamanca we visited Churches and parishes that were once under the care of the Society but have been given over to the diocese. While in Madrid, the group visited Cathedrals, Castles, shrines, and other historical sites.

The high points of the Arrupe month for me were the retreat which was scheduled after we had visited the birth place of our founder. Such a visit allowed the mind to recall the journeys which St. Ignatius himself made to places like Arantzazu and other shrines while after he had recovered from his illness. After the retreat we celebrated St. Ignatius day with renewal of our vows and a party. In the afternoon we visited a Jesuit community at the Loyola Pastoral Centre which offered a number of programmes to the people. For example the Centre offers the spiritual exercises, youth mass, reflection and

discussion on matters of faith and other issues which are affecting the people, and are empowering the youths to be creative in implementing programmes which have come out of their reflections. I think this was a grace which was bestowed on the group, to have visited a Jesuit community which is involved in such a wide apostolic apostolate to people in Valladolid.

The six scholastics of the Guyana Region met at Jesuit Missions on the Saturday 27th September. At the moment we are the largest group of scholastics for a given region who are studying in London. The group met and had a brief sharing on their experiences of working in Guyana. In addition we also looked at practical ways how the group could make a contribution to the Region. The meeting went well. We plan to meet regularly.

Regents Meeting

Date: 15th November, 2008

Venue: Jesuit Presbytery, Brickdam

Regional Round-up

Jesuit Presbytery, Brickdam:

As the school vacations began, Brickdam became the epicenter of a bee-hive of activity as the scholastics took the Regional curia by storm. The newly injected youthfulness was plainly evident, be it chapel or refectory. Sch. Vikram Anthony returned from India after his holidays and Oliver Murphy, a candidate for the British Province, was with us for a month of community experience. One of their missions was to paint St. Thomas Moore's homestead in Kitty and the task lasted about 2 weeks. **Fr. Wong** was bit down a couple of times, but nothing to worry and as we all know he is a staunch fighter and he is back to his normal self. The Clergy Conference that brought most of the Jesuits into the city, was an apt occasion for a get-together which was held at the Presbytery. Brickdam had two auspicious visitors over the month: **Fr. Ranjit**, Provincial of Ranchi and **Fr. Jossy Rodrigues**, Socius to the Provincial of Karnataka. The 'Men from the East' certainly made a difference with their presence.

Plaisance:

The two-member community of Plaisance, **Frs James Gonsalves and Robert Barrow**, has been very active over the months with renovation of Churches on East Coast. The magnificent new look of St John the Baptist Church tells it all. The traditional Church fair on Diwali afternoon was a witness to their hard work, which saw hundreds of people of all faiths flocking to it.

St Pius X Church

After a few months of desert silence the St Pius X Church campus has a new community with **Fr Dermot Preston and Sch Ramesh**, assisted by **Fr Simon Bishop** who is in Guyana for a few months of Experience. While Fr Preston has been busy with his PLA seminars and Regional Curia work, Sch Ramesh has been teaching at Marian Academy and assisting in the parish. Fr Simon, with his typical lively persona has been interacting with the youth of 'Search' group, conducting retreats and programmes and also assisting in the parishes.

GHDC, Berbice:

The entire new community with young blood infused in it, could not be short of injecting a sense of new life into the vision of Fr Chira at the Centre. The New energy was evident everywhere.

Fr. Tony, Fr. Gilbert and Sch. Edwin are working as a team in Corentyne. Our main focus is on pastoral ministry which comprises St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church Port Mourant and St. Joaquim's in Springlands which has Siparuta as its substation. We also take care of the parish in Black bush Polder. We renew our pastoral care with the Parishioners by celebrating the Eucharist on week days and on Sundays. The choir is revitalized by the presence of Sch. Edwin through his musical accompaniment. We have started a youth group in the parish which is active.

Apart from our pastoral activities we focus on Guyana Human Development Multi - Purpose Centre. The major thrust is the transformation of Guyana into a nation with peace, harmony and human progress. Apart from regular courses on computer, the youth are motivated through value education and courses on personality development. Our presence in the non-catholic surrounding directs us towards the inter-faith dialogue with them. Our visits to their houses promote human relationship which promotes social harmony. Our library provides them with an opportunity to broaden their horizons through reading.

The children, who attend our Saturday classes, learn to sing, spell, read and write at the basic level and often show a keen interest through the visual media in the stories and fables of old. They also socialize with other children of their own age and learn to accept differences in ethnic and religious backgrounds. Our hope is that they will grow up to be adults who can live in peace and harmony and be good citizens of tomorrow.

St Ignatius, Lethem:

With **Fr Kuruvila** back from his vacation and **Fr Joaquim** off to India for his vacation, the in-between period prince of Lethem, new regent **Sch Clide** ruled the roast in the place. The 'notoriously quiet' set up was no less busy from any other place. The trademark 'Honey Festival' under the expertise of Fr Joaquim was done in a professional way with Explanatory exhibition and honey distribution couples with contest for children. The PLA Seminar, steered by **Frs Dermot & Joaquim**, based on the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony,

was attended by 40 PLAs from 20 villages. The Junior Parish Council had a day out with Fishing Competition, with prized catch for First Fish and Most Fish! The Parish Council organized a fund raising programme for the Church and also matches for both Men and Women. **Sch Clide** was busy with his Confirmation classes for the children in the parish, while **Fr Kuruvila**, went around visiting schools, interacting with Children and supporting them with material help.

Aishalton:

With the new house nearing completion and the new members joining the community- **Sch Jerri** for his regency and **Fr Paul Dominic** for his pastoral ministry- **Fr Amar** and **Fr Brit** have umpteen reasons to cheer. As Fr Brit-Compton keeps himself occupied with looking after the campus and planting trees, Sch Jerri is full time at the school and the parish. Fr Amar is always on the move buying materials for the building and visiting villages around. The community had the pleasure of the visit of **Fr Ranjit, Provincial of Ranchi** accompanied by **Fr Anil**. He was certainly more than pleased with the work and the mission. **Fr Joseph Rodrigues, Socius to the Provincial of Karnataka**, is with us now, with his characteristic sense of humor.

Pakaraimas:

The quiet Missionary of the Mountains, **Fr Poulouse** led PLA Seminar for the PLAs of the far-n-near villages along with **Fr Dermot**. The new companion in the Pakaraimas **Fr Gabriel Xess (RAN)** joined them in the task. With now two-to-tango, Frs Poulouse and Gabriel are all set move ahead with their regular trails bringing into the region a new found vigour and exuberance.

CPAL – 17th Assembly 2008 in Manaus, Brazil

The Conference of Latin American Provincials (CPAL) held its 17th Assembly from 22 – 27 September. 15 Provinces were represented and 3 Regions, unfortunately Puerto Rico had difficulties with getting a visa and so was absent. For the first time however there were two representatives from Jamaica, the Regional Superior and his Socius, and also the Regional Superior from Guyana. But the icing on top of this cake was the gracious presence of V.R.P. General and one of his counselors, both of whom made the deliberations and the informal sessions both lively and instructive.

The main purpose of this Assembly was to decide on the number of common theological houses for CPAL and which of the six previously agreed ones would be chosen. The decision as to the number of the houses and which ones, was taken and the proposal referred to Fr. General and his Counselors for approval. The participants were able to visit the meeting of the waters of the river Negro and the Solen..... and also had a guided tour of the famous opera house in down-town Manaus, where Dame Margot Fontaine performed her last dance and left her dancing shoes to the museum. The whether was expected to be very hot, but on the whole it turned out to be quite pleasant, even quite cold in the early mornings. The next Assembly will be held in May 2009 in Ecuador.

Adieus to Fr. Raj

We bid a warm farewell to **Fr. Raj** who served in Guyana region for about 5 years. The Guyana region is ever grateful for his meritorious service to the region and the people of Guyana. He was parish priest at Sacred Heart and Port Mourant, and was a great instrument in the works of the

region. He has returned to Madurai province to take on some other mission. He went via Jesuit missions in London and was there for a week. Kudos to you Fr. Raj for all the contributions to this land of Guyana and best wishes from the Region for the ministry ahead.



Hurray... Its my Birthday!!!

Nov 01 – Jesuraj Paul
Nov 04 – Michael Holman
Nov 23 – Meerabux Compton

Dec 09 – Robert Barrow
Dec 12 – A Lourduraj

May God bless you friends!

