



Nyumbani Newsletter

December, 2009

Dear Friends of Nyumbani,

All our 3,588 children and 214 staff join with me in sending you blessings for Peace and Joy as we once more celebrate Christ's Birth. At a time in our world where the values which guide our globally interdependent living can be determined by technologically-driven human greed, we pray that the contemplation of God's intervention as a human child may awaken new faith and hope in the Gospel message of respect for the dignity and equality of each human person and our mutual responsibility and caring.

November 20th saw us gather in the Fr. Angelo D'Agostino Hall for the 3rd Anniversary of the passing on of our Founder. Mass was celebrated by his Jesuit Colleague, Fr. Andrew Rusatsi, SJ assisted by Fr. Pascal Mwijage, SJ.



Fr. D'Agostino's memorial

In recalling the Foundation Days, I spoke of the faith which convinced Fr. D'Agostino that it was indeed God who was calling him in his later years to redirect his ministry in order to reach out in compassion to HIV infected orphans. He always started his day with celebration of the Eucharist from which he derived the courage and strength needed to meet the challenges in pioneering Nyumbani. He commended Nyumbani children and staff to God faithfully each day and it was to the power of prayer that he attributed Nyumbani's fruitful development. The Nyumbani Home children prepared a very beautiful, moving liturgy which included a special poem, *If only I had known*, an excerpt from which follows:

If only I had known

*If I had only known I'd never hear your voice again
I'd memorize each thing you ever said
And on those lovely nights, I would think of them once more
And keep your words alive inside my head
If I had only known I'd never hear your voice again.
You were the treasure in our hearts
You were the one who always stood beside us; so unaware
We foolishly believed that you would always be there
But then there came a day when we closed our eyes and you
slipped away ...*

World Aids Day, 1st December, was the next significant event in the Nyumbani calendar. In preparation, one of our media houses, Kenya Television Network, shot a documentary on Nyumbani Home which included my being interviewed. There was a moving sequel to this: On seeing the documentary, a Loreto past student, Mrs. Elizabeth Nderitu, who knew me as Principal of Loreto High School, Limuru, was moved to reach out to our children through hosting a luncheon at her home on 10th December to which she invited other Loreto past students and which raised considerable funds. On the actual day all our programs participated in World AIDS Day functions – Nyumbani Home children at a National event in Nairobi, Lea Toto in various local events and Nyumbani Village both participated in a District func-



World Aids Day celebrations at Lea Toto



World Aids Day celebration at Nyumbani Village

tion as well as hosting their own event. Around this time of year too, the Miconazole competition is hosted by Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (*MEDS*) and Johnson & Johnson which takes the form of projects being invited to submit entries based on answering questions to describe their program. All three of our programs entered the competition and Nyumbani Home emerged First Overall with Nyumbani Village in Category 2 and Lea Toto in Category 3. Prizes received were Kshs. 250,000, Kshs. 75,000 and Kshs. 50,000 respectively. We really rejoiced in this great achievement. Prior to this, a documentary on a selection of the program entries was shot, Nyumbani being one. This documentary was launched at the Awards Ceremony on the 4th of December, 2009 and well depicted Nyumbani Home and Lea Toto.

Again, around World Aids Day, Rotary Karen, organised a walk in which our Nyumbani Children participated and the Club has recently responded very generously to our appeal for help. On 30th November, I was invited to make a presentation on “Caring for HIV Positive Children – Obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights” at the National Advocacy Forum on HIV and Issues Affecting Children. It gave me great joy to speak on the importance of ensuring their rights – key to which is the right to holistic antiretroviral treatment. My other strong lobbying point was their right to be protected from discrimination, this in view of the stigma and discrimination which they can come up against, sometimes from their own

extended family, often through insensitive, even offensive media portrayal and in public fora like school and places of entertainment.

Much of our activity in Nyumbani Village is now centered on the setting up of the Lawson High School which will open on 8th February, 2010. One classroom block, two Science Laboratories and the Administration Block are now complete with another classroom block and a Library cum computer laboratory due for completion before school opens. We have been blessed that the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have missioned two Sisters to help set up the school, Sister Francis Cassidy and Sister Rose Monica Katust. Sister Rose Monica has already moved into the Village and is busy ensuring that her education passion – quality science teaching will be in place.

We were delighted to receive a visit to Nyumbani Home from two of the Jesuit General Consultors on 14th December and, in the evening of the same day, 15 Nyumbani staff and 10 children were invited to a Eucharistic Celebration at Hekima College after which we met with the Jesuit Superior General Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, SJ. We are deeply grateful that a Jesuit presence continues in Nyumbani, at present in the person of Fr. Paschal Mwijage, SJ, Financial Administrator, and recently through having Dr. Alex Wainaina as Medical Director in Lea Toto program.

As always I conclude by reiterating our ever- heartfelt gratitude to all our Friends of Nyumbani, without whose support, the Nyumbani mission could not continue. May we all experience that the values which are dear to our hearts and by which we wish to live are nurtured in our families, workplace and the wider community during the family celebration of Christmas.

Sister Mary