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JMJ

Fr. Antony/ St. Mary's Christmas Letter 2009

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Our love and Christmas and New Year Greetings from Fr. Antony Xavier Savarimuthu and from the staff and students of all institutions at St. Mary's in India.

We have been praying for the nation of United States of America for the financial crisis that is prevalent there and loss of jobs. Especially the people suffering without enough income to meet both their ends. We pray that none of our benefactors too suffer this way. This situation has reflected on our financial position. I think many of our benefactors stopped helping us due to their personal situations. So we are finding it very hard and yet I do not force or coax anybody to contribute. On the contrary as soon as we receive a letter from somebody giving some reason for stopping their help, we only intensify our prayers for them and tell them not to worry. We request them to take care of themselves. Because I know most of our benefactors are not well to do people. They do sacrifice to support their children. Still I hope there will be some way or other through which God in his great mercy and generosity will stand by us. That is our unshakeable confidence and trust.

I am trying my best to cultivate our lands and get the best possible yield from them. Though our school lands are one of the best pieces of land in this area, still we have to depend on water. The water is flowing from the Dam, which is filled by water flowing from the neighboring state. But the state people do not want to give us water. This year the dam has water only for about a week's irrigation. We are anxious and the seasonal rain is very late. When Mr. Ken Egide from Arizona came here, it was like hot summer. He left on 27th of October, that night onwards we have some rain. It has been raining past five days continuously. But if it stops then we have to depend on the dam which is not filled and there is no hope of getting water. So we have to somehow irrigate the fields through the bore wells. So I go to the fields taking a big stick for support lest I fall down several times. Unless I go there the workers do not labor and the work is not done properly. I wish the rain continues for at least 2 months. Then the crops will be success. Otherwise it is going to be tough. (Update: The rain already stopped.)

The school year started on 1st June 2009. We received the news of Swine flu spreading in India too much later than in U.S.A. It continues to spread here and there. So far we have not heard of anybody being affected by this flu in this area of about 3 or 4 districts. We pray every day that it should not affect our students. We have given enough of awareness about this, how to avoid being affected by this. Our children always keep clean. We have clean water from our wells and we keep clean all around. The children and staff need not go out for their needs, as almost all the needed things are available within the compounds. We give our children good meals and they are so very happy and healthy. So far God has protected all of us.

We would like to know if any of our benefactors are affected by swine flu and how they are now. We pray that they be saved from all of these. We also pray for all those who have discontinued their support. In the Mass also every day we pray for all our benefactors for the living and also those who have passed away and rested in the Lord. We have daily Mass and also morning and evening prayers, Rosaries, etc.

We have completed one of our school buildings this year, because of the generous gift of a particular benefactor who wants to be anonymous. If they continue this year, we will complete another building and then we will have to build a hospital and college buildings. They all require a lot of funds. One of our benefactors from North Carolina is trying to help us in finding funds for the Hospital. Please pray for his success.

You all know 15th August is our Day of Freedom. So the whole country celebrates it as best as possible. We hoist our national flag and sing the national anthem. One special guest is invited to talk about the freedom struggle. The children also give talks and stage little dramas, dance and convey their love for the nation. At the end all the children are distributed with candies and they jump and dance and are very happy.

This time our honorable guest was Mr. Ken Egide from Arizona, U.S.A. He arrived on 14th October 2009. He stayed about 14 days and left on 27th October 2009. Since he arrived at Trichy airport in India, I went and picked him up. Likewise I have accompanied him also on 27th October and saw him off. While he was here he met all the children, especially the children he supports very faithfully. He was with them and was very very happy. If any of our friends and benefactors wish to come and see what is going on here, they are welcome!! Nowadays I am not able to take the guests to many places on tour, because of my age and poor health. Though I felt bad about it, Mr. Ken Egide was as magnanimous as usual and he made himself happy walking around. The only place we went was to the National Shrine of our Blessed Mother at Vailankanni.

We give the children books, note books, uniform and mat for their bed, pencils and pens, some more school supplies free of cost. Sometimes some benefactors send some extra money for their children. That helps us to give them some more free things, which they need. This year we also supplied 30 additional sets of hearing aids freely. We also conduct eye camps and check their vision and other limbs are also checked through the camp. So that we save their limbs from worsening their condition they are now. This way we do our best.

A few benefactors expect their sponsored children to write them letters often and also send email as often as possible. Please understand us. We are very regular in writing 3 times a year and most of the times when benefactors write to their children and when they need some special information we do reply them. Otherwise the children themselves cannot sit down and write and reply them more often than 3 or 5 times a year. Many matters are involved in it. So we would be very grateful if they are content with receiving 3 to 5 times a year reply from their children. However as soon as we hear that somebody passed away we immediately pray in the Mass specially and also write them letter to console them.

That is all the news at this time so will end and leave space for a letter from our trusted friend and benefactor, Fr. Robert Altier (President of Help the helpless)

Again wishing you all Happy Christmas and Joyous New Year.

Yours in Jesus,

Fr. Antony Xavier and all the staff and students.

Fr. Altier Christmas letter

Praised be Jesus Christ!

May God reward all of you for your generosity in supporting these precious children and helping Fr. Antony to realize the dream he has to provide for the children from the time they are young until they are able to care for themselves as well rounded, productive adults who have been blessed with a fine education that rivals anything in their country. It is always exciting, but also astounding to see the Lord at work. In this case He takes those who are hopeless, rejected and abandoned and raises them up through the charity of others not merely to survive, but to thrive and to lead others because of the foundation they have received.

While it may not seem much in your eyes, your prayers, letters, gifts and other support for these children are the means God uses to work these miracles. No one will outdo God in generosity and there are very few charities that have benefactors as generous as Help the Helpless. Your generosity is being multiplied daily by the Lord for the individual good of the children, for the greater good of St. Mary's Schools and it will ultimately be to the benefit of the country. As we approach the wonderful Solemnity of Christmas, I pray that you will be able to see your goodness and charity as an extension of the goodness and charity of God in coming to us broken, helpless creatures to raise us up and to bring us to eternal life.

May God's blessings be poured out in abundance upon you and your family,

Fr. Robert J. Altier