

THE DIARY OF MY MISSION WORK IN
SRI LANKA

Part One – Three (*Consolidated*)

Date: 17 - 30 November 2008 Pages: 1 - 22

Monday 17 November 2008.

My first day in Sri Lanka, arrived at the airport feeling rather tired and run down. Started travelling from York at 2.30am for Manchester Airport (17th) and arriving at Colombo main airport at 8.30am (18th) rather a boring and tiring journey, could not sleep during the journey perhaps with worrying about missing flights etc, had to change at Doha, and wait for what seemed like an everlasting seven hours for my connection.

When I did arrive I was picked up by one of the cathedral staff and taken to accommodation in the diocesan house within the precincts of the Anglican Cathedral of Colombo, where I was exhausted and need of a shower and change of clothing. The clergy made me feel welcome and they loved my clear English accent.

I will reside here until the 29th November when I will then travel up to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. The diocesan house is where all the visiting and guest clergy and ministers etc. stay, The Assistant Priest in Charge of the Cathedral is also resident here and he and his family are also responsible with the running of the house, the diocesan house also includes conference rooms and a downstairs place of rest for parishioners who can come and rest, talk and even order a meal at a reasonable price. There are quite a few meetings, gathering and Sunday groups etc which use the conference rooms, there are six rooms all with own bathrooms for the visiting guests who come to stop by appointment.

In the meantime while in Colombo I will help assist with the Cathedral clergy. I did manage to buy and eat a Vegetable Pasty, but it nearly burnt my mouth out. I should have guessed, just like in the Caribbean everything must be spicy.

I am still not feeling too great, still have a bit of travel sickness and perhaps the sudden change of climate is not helping. So feeling a bit slow and tired, but managed to cross the green to the Cathedral for evening prayer at 4pm, in the South side Chapel which I read from the TSSF Manual, two other people turned up to join me. But now I am just chilling out for the rest of the evening.

Just before retiring to bed at about 8pm I managed to contact my dear

friend Sandaseeli Pannipitrya. 'Sanda' as she is better known by her nick name, is Sri Lankan to whom I knew during her earlier student days, she studied at Durham University between 2002 - 2005, whom I met through other friends, since then, even after she had returned to Sri Lanka, we have remained good friends and kept in contact, so it is nice to have an old friend who lives in Sri Lanka.

Tuesday 18th November 2008.

It is now 5.45am and the old alarm clock did the old mischievous trick of waking me up for Morning Prayer at the Cathedral. Morning Prayer is at 7am followed by Communion at 7.30am, in the North side Chapel, and just like in the Caribbean, we English do not know anything about early services like this, even Sunday services starts with Morning Prayer at 7am, yes it will get some getting used to even so I am always up early. Just have time for a spiced Patta for breakfast, as they call them over here, this is a kind of Egg Plant.

I was asked to read the first lesson for Morning Prayer, the Communion Service was conducted by the Archdeacon of Colombo.

Afterwards the Archdeacon of Colombo (Chrishantha Mendis) who also acts as the sort of Dean of the Cathedral had a good chat with me, He had served under both Bishop David Shepherd and Archbishop David Hope in England for a while.

He seems to be very happy that I had arrived. They do not have a Dean as such at the Cathedral, The Archdeacon of Colombo acts as Dean (head clergyman of the Cathedral) The Assistant Priest who lives in the diocesan house acts on his behalf like a deputy.

The Archdeacon is already organising for me to be involved with Christmas Services when I return back to this residence at the diocesan house from St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa during the Christmas period. I also had to see the bishops PA, this morning to up date my monthly visa which I had to have stamped in England before I came, this now will be updated for my first year, now that I have arrived. On the whole I am excited but still a little worried to what they expect from me, but I am looking forward to the experience and my duties in time to come, this work in Sri Lanka will give me so much experience. Even so with the exciting challenge and change to my life, there are worries naturally, but believe me, I have never been looked after so much in my life, they are great people here, so caring, friendly and making you feel that you have

been here for years already.

I thank God so much for this work he is giving me.

Wednesday 19th November 2008.

Had a terrible night did not sleep at all for various reasons, bugs and mosquito's biting me, even so I put cream on. Dogs barking all night, and some sort of green lizard appearing on and off running around my room, plenty of animal and bug life going on inside and outside my room, and odd noises and squeals. The lizard even ran over me in bed. Also still trying to get used to the heat, even with a fan on all night, it is still very clammy and hot. Looks like I have Chicken Pox on my legs with mosquito bites. I must have had at least three showers during the night, I have my own bathroom in the room in the diocesan house, which is a great advantage seeing that I am always ever having showers.

I was left a message last night that I have to see the bishop today at 5pm. and I was told to stay in bed this morning and rest, which I felt better for afterwards.

Took a slow walk this afternoon down to the market, what an experience, life is completely so different here, it would take me some time to write up the experience and life style in Sri Lanka, it is so unreal, you would not believe it, The British police if they took duty over here would have a hay day booking and fining motorists if they went by our laws. I would not know where to start telling you all the law breaking rules they would not get away with in England.

MY VISIT WITH THE BISHOP

Bishop Duleep de Chickera, the Bishop of Colombo made me more than welcome, and hopes that I will stay for at least two years, he commented that it is people like me that he needs to support the Church in Sri Lanka, after my two years volunteered work (paid for by sponsors and organisations) my future will be discussed by the bishop. He is very keen on missionary work and bringing the whole wide Church together.

The bishop personally licensed me today to the following positions and work.

1. Lay Chaplain and partly responsible for pastoral care to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa under the headmaster. This will include serving on

some College committees, and leading retreats and quiet days for the pupils, with some teaching in religious studies and English.

2. Permission to minister, preach and distribute the sacrament, including conducting Communion by extension when required in the diocese as well as St. Thomas' College.

3. There will be other appointments to be considered by the bishop on some of the diocesan committees and organisations at a later date which may benefit me and the bishop.

He is keen to have me involved in certain organisations where he feels I will be a help.

4. To help build up the Franciscan work within the diocese with Br. Lionel. This is a project the bishop is keen to try and get off the ground.

During half term at St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa, which is my main project and vocation here, I will be resident at the diocesan house.

Everything from the Archdeacons house, bishops house, diocesan office, diocesan house, including homes of retired clergy, and the diocesan library, seem to surround the Cathedral in its beautiful grounds with its greens.

The cathedral grounds are also the home of horses, geese, pheasants and other poultry. The Bishop himself keeps dogs and tortoises.

In some cases I may be a guest elsewhere when having to perform other duties or attend meetings within the diocese. The bishop wishes me to meet as many people as possible involved within diocesan organisations and work, where I may become involved with some of them.

As well as my kind sponsors from various sponsors and organisations back in England, the bishop surprised me to day by telling me that St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa will provide me with free accommodation and food.

I have also been given access to the diocesan office within the Cathedral grounds for the use of internet, etc. My accommodation in both the diocesan house and at St. Thomas' College include my own bathroom and have provisions for study and writing. The bishop insists that all my accommodation and meals are free, and also with the bishop knowing of my health problems he is concerned for my medication and diet of meals. He clearly pointed out to me that I am his guest and that he would look after me at all times and that need not to worry about anything in finance and other personal matters, he is just round the corner or phone call away if I need him at any time. He insisted that I called him by his first name Duleep rather than addressing him as bishop or my Lord all the time, he clearly made the point that everyone here are like one family and between each other we do not call people by their title but by Christian names only.

He suggested that I should open a bank account in Sri Lanka so that all my money is safe, a good safe is also available. My small free accommodation, meals and sponsors from England will keep me going. The bishop was so easy and friendly to talk to, down to earth, not like talking up to a bishop.

Service of licence:

Given authority by the Bishop. 530pm. (Diocesan Office) in the way it is done in Colombo - This is slightly different to how it is done in England. Vows and promises were made, followed by prayers and laying on of hands, followed by the blessing. No full service is required here just the quick simple taking of vows, some prayers laying on of hands and blessing by the bishop in private. There is no formal service.

Thursday 20th November 2008.

Feel so refreshed and raring to go, after my talk with the bishop. I really now feel the responsibilities and work what is expected from me, more than I bargained for and in a way a shock with the amount of work and expectations required from me, I now really have the chance to prove myself and understand the calling I am required to perform.

Yesterday my old friend Sanda, who I mentioned earlier turned up to visit me, first time I had not seen her face to face for three years, it felt so wonderful to see her again, (the biggest hug I have had for years, and I was not complaining) and also know I have a true friend in Sri Lanka, as well as having all my other friends I have met during my work, which I can rightly call a second family with the way they look after me and care about me.

Sanda and I are planning going shopping to get me some sandals, and a new shirt, for my suit. I feel safer shopping with Sanda, because I been warned that many will try and short change me or change the price of things when they see me coming, thinking that I am a tourist with lots of money. I know Sanda will look after me, she has always been a caring person and was so concerned about my health earlier. But again everyone here who I work with or know are also caring.

I also need to buy a mobile phone which will be useful, but these are so cheap here, about 3000 Rupees (£15) including connecting up, and all calls with mobile or land line are cheap within a 50 distance call, no monthly fees.

Started the day with going to the 730am Communion Service at the Cathedral, (South Chapel) which was conducted by the Bishop. I read the Gospel.

I was invited round to the bishops house at 10am for Ginger Beer and to meet his wife and use the internet. Yes Ginger Beer.

The day started of fine with hot sun in fact too hot. But at 1pm the weather suddenly changed to storm thunder and lightening , and when it rains it really rains and the thunder really rattles. It is now 7pm and everywhere is just flooded, in these circumstances everything comes to a standstill, it is so bad, it is not like the English heavy shower, much worse, even the electricity keeps going on and off. So to day it really is just a 'wasted day' as they say.

Not eaten anything today, not hungry and both my arms seem to be really aching.

You just can not believe the amount of rain we have had to day, the roads are just like rivers.

Friday 21st November 2008.

Still not sleeping during the night, so I find I am very tired first thing in the morning. Attended 730am Communion this morning at the Cathedral, (South Chapel) the service taken by the Assistant Priest, Malinda de Mel. He lives in the diocesan house next door to me, when I am residence in Colombo.

I am having great difficulties with the food and do not seem able to eat anything without been sick or feeling ill, the bishop insists that I only eat scrambled egg or plain fish, but I find even that seems different in taste to normal egg or fish, and I seem to struggle with that. Plenty of water helps me a lot.

They say you must not drink tap water, but this does not make access to water difficult, everywhere you go water is free from spring water dispensers, just like the ones you find in England in offices, banks etc. This morning I spent some time in the diocesan office. I do have my own lap top in my room, but no access to the internet. Internet access is not easy in Sri Lanka, and when I need the internet I have to either go to the diocesan office or the bishops office at his residence, which he gives me permission to use when he is not using it himself. It is only dial up internet here, and not broadband.

Another hot day unbearable heat, but I seem not to suffer from headaches

which I did suffer a lot in England with my blood pressure, in fact I do not seem to have any side affects or problems which I had in England with my health. Perhaps the heat and frustration of having to have showers nearly every hour takes it of my mind, or perhaps in away the climate is better for my health.

I am now spending most of my time in my room preparing work for next week for when I go up to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa, so at least I will be up in front with prep. etc.

I am meeting up with Father Marc, the headmaster from St. Thomas' tomorrow who will be in Colombo for a week on ministry and medical appointments. The College will be in the hands of the assistant head. Both the headmaster and I will return to St. Thomas' Gurutalawa on the 28th November for two weeks before returning to Colombo during half term holidays.

This morning I was looking at details in the Cathedral showing when Archbishop Stuart Blanch visited the diocese and Cathedral, Archbishop Blanch confirmed me at Bishopthorpe in 1975, and with knowing Archbishop Blanch who lived at Bishopthorpe where I too lived, it made me feel more in away not a stranger here in a funny way.

Archbishops Coggan, Runcie, Carey and Williams have also left their paw mark's here at the Cathedral.

Whoops, looks like I have been thrown into the deep end already, I have just been told that I will be the Assistant Priest's side kick on Sunday Morning for Communion Service helping lead the service with the him So panic time it is. Only been here five days. But the Assistant Priest, Father Malinda is to my rescue, and with a big grin and giggle told me he would give me a dummy run tonight on where I should sit, stand and when to speak and not to speak.

I would have loved so much to have sat in the congregation for the first Sunday so I could weigh things up a little to what happens, but that does not seem to going to happen, straight in to the deep end. I have been told that the congregation will be about 150 and that the Assistant Priest and myself will be giving the host and two other Ministers will give the wine, it was mentioned to keep it on the move when giving the host or we will never get home for dinner. There will also be a baptism, they baptize in the baptism pool just inside the West doors as you enter the Cathedral. It is quite large.

At last I manage to find a store which sells beer, do not get me wrong, I am not a big drinker, but love a good old English beer every so often, which so

far since coming here I have missed. So had a couple of Special Brew last night. The first pint since my last at the 'Ebor' in Bishopthorpe, before I left home, whoops I tell a little porky, I had in fact had a couple at Manchester airport at 6am before boarding the plane hoping that it would help me sleep when travelling.

The supermarkets here are so poor, they just sell pasta, rice raw meat and crisps on the whole, can not get tins of fish or meat pasties like in Britain. Finding beer here is impossible, there are no bars or anything anywhere in this area.

All the fruit they have are hung up on racks with flies sat on them, so they do not really tempt me to buy them. Sri Lanka is very 'third world' more than I expected, so cheap also, I got two bottle of Special Brew 625ml bottles (large bottles) which only cost 35p each when converted into English Money. Its Cheap but honest it does not tempt me to buy more. I have to drink in great privacy, for ministers are not aloud to drink in public.

Saturday 22nd November 2008.

Slept well last night, the first time as well. Again it is very hot this morning, attended the 730am Communion service where a old retired Catholic Priest took the service. (Father Hugo) Could not understand a single word he was saying with speaking with an Indian accent and been in his late 80s did not help. He just seemed to go on and on and loved making up all these chants up to his prayers, it was really like a sing song from someone who lost his mind. The poor old Priest got so carried away he lost his place in the service and was staggering a round a bit in confusion. My health seems so much better since I have been here, and is improving all the time, a lot of people thought that I would never make it here because of my health, even the doctor just let me come at the last minute, but like I have said I feel so fit and energetic, perhaps because I am so happy, I am loving every minute of it here. I am so proud of myself for achieving such a big move up in my ministry and missionary work, something I never expected, and I mean it is a big step for me, I have been left with responsibilities and it really makes me so determined to do well. Already I have a good tan and look so healthy, my weight is also going down because of the continual sweat and heat, it is like been in a sauna all day, But I am now getting used to it all, something else which I must comment on, so many people say I look younger than what I am, even the

bishop knocked 9 years of me, he thought I looked 36, and NO he was not been polite, just honest.

Must admit the only problem I have which I have already mentioned is the mosquito bites, but Sanda my friend rang me this morning and told me she as got some special spray she will bring round on Sunday afternoon, to put on my legs, she will soon make me better.

To my great joy the Church here seems to be Anglo Catholic, especially the Cathedral, where I am learning the Catholic habits. In the Cathedral no one is aloud into the sanctuary except for priests, lay ministers and servers and then we have to have bare feet, a bit embarrassing for me seeing that my feet are not too good especially also in the past having two in-growing toe nails removed, so not a pretty pair of feet to look at, a bit embarrassing. Only the west front of the Cathedral is fully kitted out with glass in its windows every where else is just opened windows with like carved stone put in filling the large gaps, do not need windows to keep the cold out. Fans are just continually kept turned on in the nave and chancel roof. Need no pullovers here. In fact I only where my shorts under my cassack and alb, it is so hot, shhhhh do not tell anyone.

Again I have some time for preparation for Sunday and towards my work at St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. I promised Father Ashley this morning that I would visit him sometime today, he only lives across the Cathedral green in the clergy retired house. He is such a down to earth man, and speaks English very well. English is encourage here very much, especially in the Church. On Sundays there are three services of Communion for the three main languages spoken here, but during mid week all the services are in English, 'Praise the Lord' or else I would be in a bit of a mess. Even English lessons are set up once a week in the diocesan house to teach all staff and their children English.

The Assistant Priest, Father Malinda, is preparing me a proper Sri Lankan Curry for tonight. Hope it is not going to be too hot because I do not want to be setting the altar frontal on fire with flames from my mouth tomorrow morning when I start talking, a bit like my Mother when she gets carried away, you have to dodge the flames from her mouth.

I have now returned to writing my diary since eating my curry, very nice, the rice was to large a portion, and I have asked for at least a third of that amount next time. I ate and stuffed myself to nearly bursting to be polite rather than turning half of it away due to overloading the rice, they serve the rice on its own then there is a bowl of curry sauce, and the chicken is separate which you have to cut up and add to the rice bit by bit then pour a

little source over. The side salad was so refreshing.

My dear friend Sanda also rang me this evening, concerned about my problems with the heat and food, and she coming over tomorrow (Sunday) after Mass to feed me properly. She is preparing a English dish for me and then coming over for the day with the meal, during the evening we will probably go to the café bar.

Sunday 23rd November 2008.

This morning was my first service in the main part of the Cathedral that I helped conduct with the Assistant Priest, what an experience. The massive Cathedral and the 14 foot long alter table in the central space made me look so small, especially when I was stood behind the altar for at least half of the service. Today was the first time I was the main focus throughout the service, everyone in the congregation watching my every move and trying to weigh me up. I helped conduct part of the service. I helped during the Communion and distributed the host, and after the Communion all the children about 60 of them came up for a blessing which I was asked to do one by one, while the Assistant Priest cleared away and dispersed of the remaining sacraments.

I felt so proud of myself but looked so small with the vast congregation and building. The Service was High Mass all the Ministers and servers had to have bare feet. Everything was High Church standard, it is a good job that I am Anglo Catholic myself and have some knowledge of that type of service.

There were at least 6 servers all running round you doing this and that, you always had a server stood next to you to turn the page in the book or pass things to you, it was a real traditional Catholic service and I was so proud of myself, ministers here what ever order or level are very much respected with dignity. I was introduced to the congregation during the service and what my work was in Sri Lanka. After the service everyone came and had a word with me it was nearly one hour before I escaped back to the vestry. So many people thought I was so sweet and proficient and I had a number of offers back for lunch, it was also commented that a couple of young ladies blushed and felt shy when they spoke to me. Father Malinda said you will never leave Sri Lanka they will not let you.

I have been advised to wear my white cassack rather than my black cassack because of heat, but I like my old tradition black cassack.

I am loving every minute here, and feel so respected, and feel that I am

performing my vocation and work which I have always wanted to do to this standard. I feel so responsible and relied upon. The Church and the people really support me for my work here and thank me so much for coming to Sri Lanka.

They are so much in wanting to mix and share with the English tradition, to them they see the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England as part of their Church, not forgetting until recently Sri Lanka was British territory and it was only up until recently that they had their first Sri Lankan who became Bishop of Colombo. All the bishops from the 1820s until the 1960s were British.

Now just chilling out waiting for what I hope is going to be a proper English dinner from Sanda when she arrives. Feeling very hungry now, not been able to eat much of the food here. I am basically living on plain biscuits as my main diet, because that is all what my stomach seems to be able to take.

The other problem I seem to have during the Cathedral services which we ministers have to do is prostrating. Instead of bowing we all line up and go right down on our knees with heads touching the floor, the problem is the chancel floor is shiny wood so you tend to start sliding on your knees under the Alb backwards when you go down, trying in vain with your bare feet like a break to prevent you from sliding back and falling flat on your stomach and face. I had to follow the same timing as the Assistant Priest, and kept praying under my breath no more please I am beginning to slide, after 30 seconds to my relief we got up.

I would say the Cathedral is the same size as Selby Abbey but very wide, I will try and send some photos later.

Sanda came round at about 3pm but did not stop long, I was tired and still had work to do.

[Monday 24 November 2008.](#)

Attended Communion Service in the Cathedral North Chapel at 730am, this was conducted by a local Vicar from a nearby Parish, I read the Gospel. In Colombo, The Archdeacon of Colombo acts as Dean, then he is supported by the Assistant Priest who both live in the Cathedral grounds. The seven Canons of Colombo are non resident. The Archdeacon of Jaffna, The Archdeacon of Galle and the Archdeacon of Nuwara Eliya also have a stall each in the Cathedral. The other diocese in Sri Lanka is Kurunagala, The Bishop of Kurunagala only needs one Archdeacon, the Archdeacon of

Kurunagala. I am not sure how his Cathedral staff are arranged. I have been asked to visit Bishop Swithin Fernando, who was a former Bishop of Colombo in the early eighties, he is now in late age, and is wheel chair bound and lives in one of the retired clergy houses in the Cathedral grounds. I have been told he is very stubborn, proud and dignified, so been told do not be surprised if I get talked down to, put in my place and get no smiles. He did not take his eyes off me all through the service on Sunday, when he was in the congregation.

This part of Colombo is the more wealthier part even so it is still poor and run down in my view, it is where the bishop, and all the main government ministers and all the big whigs live, where all the big government quarters are etc. the whole area is patrolled and guarded by armed government forces with guns, who even stop cars now and again for checks.

[Tuesday 25 November 2008.](#)

Still have not been able to see Father Marc, the headmaster of St. Thomas' he is now in hospital having a minor operation, but I will meet him soon. Went to the office to pick up my passport, all stamped now for the next year. I bumped into The Archdeacon of Jaffna who is also one of the bishops advisers, in the diocesan office, it was he who introduced me to the bishop before, he is a nice chap to talk to and is very down to earth. I have very bad mosquito bites from top to bottom, in fact I counted 107 at least, they burn and make big blotch's in fact they are like chicken Pox, fortunately I do not have one on my face or neck, just everywhere else. My bed is now fitted with a mosquito net and my room is sprayed every hour during the day, I also have a plug in spray.

Attended the 730am Communion service in the Cathedral North Chapel, the Archdeacon of Colombo took the service.

Still have not yet got round to seeing Bishop Swithin Fernando, a former Bishop of Colombo who lives in one of the retired clergy houses in the grounds. Not really looking forward to meeting him with what people keep saying how stubborn and stern he is.

The bishop of Colombo keeps a small fleet of Tut Tuts (3 wheeler cars) in the grounds with drivers, so if we need to pop anywhere we just ask one of the drivers and tell them to go where we want.

Tut Tuts are the most common form of transport and you see them dashing everywhere. You only have to go up the road and one will pip at you asking you if you want a lift, it is also their form of Taxi service where half

the people make a living from it, they just sound like the space ship things in 'Flash Gordon', they make a wearied sound and also look wearied. The traffic is terrible, they are no give ways, markings on the road, or lights or anything you just keep driving and hooting your horn to let everyone know you are coming, it is just continual hooting all day. When it is busy on rush hour a police man just stands on the road side and just continually keeps blowing his whistle and waving his arms around, to me I can not see the point nothing ever happens differently and no body takes notice. The traffic is just mad, no understanding is needed, women drivers from England would love it here. The streets are again packed with government troops with guns, they dress like the American Police but have light brown uniform.

Wednesday 26 November 2008.

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This morning I started by attending Communion in the North side Chapel of the Cathedral which was taken by one of the local Clergy. I am writing now while having a bowl of some sort of cereals with rather a kind of warmish milk, which I managed to muster from the pantry. The weather is a bit warmer but still cloudy and some rain.

Here it is now 8.30am which will be 3.15am in your time. The mosquito net put around my bed made a big difference last night, I even sprayed the bug killer around the bed called 'Mortein' it is supposed to keep all the bugs and reptiles and whatever else away. I have been told my work at St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa will be in full swing when I arrive there for two weeks, helping and conducting some services, so I am trying to write as many sermons for the appropriate days best I can, I will cheat a little by using some of the ones I have already written which I used for the Ecumenical services on a Saturday Morning at Bishopthorpe. My work is not quite so much here in Colombo at the moment like it will be at St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa so I have a little more free time to catch upon things. The bishop is letting me have some settling in time.

So far my work is very tiring, due to getting used to the heat, the culture and way of life, and experiences I see each day makes you really think hard. But my health is excellent, so far I have had no dizziness, serious blood pressure problems, passing out or bad chest and heart pain like I had in England, my health seems so much to have changed, perhaps the climate and the enjoyment of my work, and the change in my life is the cause of this. Perhaps this is just what I needed a new change a new way

of life, which is helping me forget the horrible last 3 years I have suffered with various problems and setbacks. A new life as now opened for me, such a difference, perhaps God gave me this work for this purpose, and maybe he gave me this work because he feels it is what he wants me to do. At last I have found my vocation which I have been looking for so much at home. This afternoon when I have time I must visit Father Ashley which I have promised to do, and the visit to the retired bishop which I am a bit nervous about.

My legs are very poor with mosquito bites and are beginning to swell a little, been advised to visit the doctor for a check up, but we are going to wait until tomorrow before we decide for certain.

It is very hot in Colombo, I have to change my shirt at least twice a day. Today I have been asked to join the Franciscan organisation and meet Brother Lionel some time and help in working and bringing together the Franciscans in Sri Lanka together as a team to work among the Church, we will discuss and perform duties as members of the Franciscan Orders in supporting the Church here, so as well as my other duties I will be very much involved in supporting and help in leading the way of the Franciscan life here in Sri Lanka.

Already pressure future work as well as my main duties I have been licensed to do is building up.

However hard I try I can not accept any of the food here, even the plain food like bread etc tastes different, the fruit is different and very dodgy because they always hang it out in view for sale, the heat and flies make it so that you do not want to buy it. I have a packet of Cornflakes which I like, but milk goes off so quick here even in the fridge. The curries here are so dry and sour and hot. Even their cucumbers and tomatoes and onions taste so different.

I seem to always have serious tummy or bowel problems after eating any food which is a problem, my stomach obviously can not take the food, and my sickness can not be doing my insides good.

I just really eat biscuits or cornflakes.

The rest of the day is really just study and Prep. Work now.

Please excuse any grammar, I have had the computer dictionary to help with some corrections, but rushed in some cases.

Thursday 27 November 2008.

Feeling very ill after last nights curry. I have not slept all night, so much pain in the stomach, sickness and more. Managed to fall asleep at about 5am and did not wake up till 9am. I then felt a little better and staggered to the diocesan office for some work I needed to do.

Later I went to the shop again for some milk. On the way admired the crazy traffic and their driving.

As well as the Tut Tuts and normal 1950 type cars and motor cycles, the buses look about the 1940s type which were doing their runs, you just stick out your hand if you want to get on board. They look very dodgy, some even have cracked windows and the wheels do not always look too safe. The sound of the engines also sound a bit rough. If the buses are full of people you just get on and hang on out of the doors or hang on to the side of the bus, hanging out into the path of the traffic, if anything went past close they would hit you, even mothers holding their kids hang out like this it is so frightening to see and so unbelievable. Our police would have fits with what they saw.

Motor cycles go crazy they just do u turns, you do not need to wear a helmet for motor cycles, and cycles do not need lights at night time. Many parents ride their motor cycles with their children even two three and even sitting on the handle bars with no helmets, dodging the main traffic, there are no laws at all. The cycles are all just bits of scrap metal on wheels, never see any modern bikes, they are all 1950 like, most with flat tyres or even bent wheels. Our Archdeacon even owns a cycle, a bit like the 1980s model, he is proud of it because it is up to date class cycle. Mountain bikes and gears are unheard of for bike. Again there are no laws for cyclists, they do not need lights at night, and they have just the same right of motor vehicles of riding up the centre of the road and even more, really you need to see for yourselves to believe.

It is very hot this morning too hot, just ringing wet with sweat, I heard from my sister today from England, that it is bad snow, what a pity, but again sometimes I feel I wish I was in the snow.

Weighed myself this morning, and in 10 days I have lost 11lbs in weight, not far of a stone only 3lbs to go.

So my dear friends if you fancy losing some weight do come and visit me, with the heat you will soon melt.

I would love to see any of you, but do not expect first class accommodation here especially the areas I am based. I will help or if I can

provide some accommodation if you come, but please do not expect holiday accommodation like hotels unless you book them yourselves, but please do come and visit.

Depending where I am when you visit if you do come, will be different. If you like the wilds with small shanty villages and hills and beautiful scenery and peace then visit me when I am St. Thomas' Gurutalawa, or if you like city life, with noise, mad traffic and much more including visiting the Cathedral then visit me when I am in Colombo.

Today is a quiet day for me until I go up to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa tomorrow, which is a crazy 6 hour journey even so it is only 85 miles away, it is all back roads, hills and heat which makes the journey slow.

So really not much to tell, missed this morning's service, could not get there with not feeling well.

Brought some like twiglet snacks and hoola hoop snacks from the supermarket. When I got back I found they are really for children, but still tried them, wow, 'children's snacks' they nearly blew my head off, never had anything so spicy. The children must even be walking around burning inside with hot spicy food.

Deciding to have an early night, not feeling too good, having real difficulty of getting used to the food and heat here, even the simplest of foods, like omelette or salads just do not seem right.

[Friday 28th November 2008.](#)

Last night had the best sleep since arriving. Got into bed at 9pm and slept right through till 530am, dreamt about going on holiday with the 'Spice Girls' and knowing them as best friends, when in fact I absolutely hate their music and the sight of them. So something must be wrong in my head when I am not in the living world. Also dreamt that I went home for a couple hours to England to see family and friends before returning to Colombo. Amazing of some of the weird dreams you can have.

Anyway, awake now and back into the real world, just feeling a bit sick with hunger, but the thought of eating anything here just makes me feel worse, tried one of the water melons which are a lot smaller than ours, but all it consisted of was lots of pips and was very sour and hard compared to ours, and yes before you ask, 'it was a water melon'.

Went to Communion this morning in the South Chapel of the Cathedral, which was conducted by the Assistant Curate (Minor Canon) Fr. Malinda

de Mel, the Archdeacon of Colombo was also there, after the service the Archdeacon asked if I would assist him at this Sunday's main service, and asked if I would take the sermon. I had to tell him that I was travelling up to St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa with the headmaster early Sunday morning.

The archdeacon wishes me to start Franciscan groups and a set of Franciscan devotion and lectures for the Cathedral when I return in December, the Bishop also wants me to start the same project at St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa.

Last night I was nearly finished with shock when a 5 foot Rat Snake crossed in front of me, it was massive. When I mentioned it to someone later on, he said that I should have caught it, he commented, 'lovely in curries'. No wonder I can not eat or think about eating here. - I think he was joking.

I have saved all the photos I have taken onto my lap top and taped them all on to discs for extra security.

I understand that yesterday I missed a group of people from Ripon Cathedral on tour, at the Cathedral. The diocese of Ripon and Leeds have big connections with the diocese of Colombo, they are twined, and the Bishop of Colombo knows the Bishop of Ripon and Leeds well. The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds, Bishop Packer, is a great support to me here in Colombo, and very keen in my work here, it was he who helped me come here, the diocese also supported me financially.

My closing days in Colombo before I go to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa are just spent trying to catch up with work and preparing for Christmas for when I return in a couple of weeks.

I have ever only been away for Christmas from home twice in my life before, once at family in Northumberland and once in Trinidad and Tobago. My mother is away in New Zealand this Christmas so it does not feel so bad been away.

Next year I am hoping to have vocation in England through Advent - the New year, but again will no doubt be busy at home, I will have to at least visit one of my parish missionary links in Bognor, and probably be invited to Ripon.

My health still continues to be strong, if not better, I feel so much happier and stronger with my health over here, perhaps because I am happy. I just have the problem with tummy ache and sickness due to eating and food problems.

Must return some books to the library today and see bishop Swithin

Fernando and Fr Ashley.

Just back from my visit with Father Ashley, He made me so welcome, I was introduced to his family, he lives in one of the 8 retired clergy houses. The clergy and people here so treat me with greatest respect, they are so pleased that I have come to work among them, in fact with out been to modest, I feel embarrassed a little the way people look after me and care so much. I love this place so much, I am growing into the life here, and my ministry and work here is so much more appreciated and looked upon, than back in England, so much more responsibility, trust and need off. My health and happiness is so much better, perhaps because of a new start in life, which I have needed so much.

Each day my strength is stronger and I am raring to go.

The hospitality is so good, many have already invited me round for lunch and visits.

Bishop Swithin Fernando is away so will not see him.

I will finish my second report here, seeing that I start at St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa, where I will start my third report which will be from there until I return to Colombo in two weeks.

[Saturday 29 November 2008.](#)

Had a bad night, could not sleep it was so hot. Last night had my first English food cooked for me on request. Fried egg, sausage and toast, even with English made butter. It went down like a treat, best meal so far, at least I could eat something, this was followed by ice cream and a bottle of Carlsberg, that is what I call satisfaction. Today is really just going to be a day of relaxing, packing and getting ready for travelling up to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. We are going to start travelling very late tonight and hope to arrive about 11pm and into the early hours of the morning to avoid heat and traffic, we should do it in about 7 hours instead of the normal 8 hours, I have been told it is a lot cooler in Gurutalawa.

It is now 5.30am and I am just preparing to shower in a minute and get ready for Communion Service. It is always a guess which chapel the service will be in and who takes it.

Just returned from Communion and it was the retired Catholic priest again who took the service, in the South Chapel of the Cathedral, nothing much changed, his singing and mumbling had not changed.

Went for a walk for while, but it just poured down. Have not eaten anything just do not feel hungry at all. Today is the first time that had my

chest pains since I arrived.

Set off for St. Thomas' College Gurutalawa today. Was picked up by friends of the headmaster of the College, who live in Colombo, who have been looking after him for the last 2 days since he left hospital. I was taken back to the house where he had been staying and we had lunch and I was introduced to his other friends who he had been staying with, his parents in law who are from India had also arrived and will be travelling down to Gurutalawa with us where they will be staying for a few weeks. After an hour lunch and chat at the headmasters friends house we set off for St. Thomas College, Gurutalawa at 5.30pm.

We arrived at 11.30pm after 6 long tiring hours of travel. The roads were terrible up and down hills and dangerous.

After we had arrived I had supper at the Headmasters house, where I met his wife and two children.

For the two weeks at St. Thomas' College on this occasion before the Christmas holidays my stay is just to weigh up, observe the lay out and to get used to the place, before returning to Colombo. This next two weeks I have no duties as such but just relaxing and getting to know the pupils, staff etc.

Seeing that the present chaplain does not leave for another two weeks I have been put in temporary accommodation this time until the Chaplains house is available after my return from spending Christmas back at the Cathedral.

I must admit the temporary accommodation I am stopping in is very poor, to the standards I expected. But it is very much cooler here, especially during the evening.

[Sunday 30 November 2008.](#)

Woke up early so decided to go for a walk after my shower, about 6am, the College grounds were already full with pupils taking part in all activities. The Service here is not till 9am. It was mentioned before I arrived that I should wear my cassack at all times. This is white with a white 4 inch band round the waist.

I had a quick glance of the College grounds, it is massive like a village with a big crescent then side roads and greens etc, there are shops, gyms, squash courts, tennis courts, swimming pool, football pitches, youth clubs, library, laundry etc. and more, as well as the classrooms, students dorms, and teachers accommodation and other College function centres, and

offices. The School is on 40 acres of land, and includes its own allotments and farming land and cattle with poultry which provide the College with income and support for their own use.

The farms and cattle are also cared for by the pupils as part of their bringing up in life with responsibilities and work. It is a ten minute steady walk from the Chaplains house to the Chapel, the headmasters house is on the other side of the Chapel. There are 500 pupils at present which 440 of them are boys and 60 of them girls, it has only recently started taking girls, and is hoping to increase the number of girls in the next few terms. For the 500 pupils there are at least 60 teaching staff, and 100 other staff, for example, secretaries, assistant teachers, labourers, drivers, Chaplain, farmers.

The College is a close knit community with all its own support, just like a small village. As well as lessons village like activities are taking place all the time, for example at break times, or time off you can go to the shop or laundry or play tennis.

This next couple of weeks I am going to make this section of my diary in describing the College, seeing that I am only observing for the two weeks and not doing much more.

Attended Communion Service this morning which I sat quietly at the back observing, but the present Chaplain who I will be taking over from in January noticed me and sent me to get robed and conduct the service with him, which I did. I Read the Gospel and helped conduct the Communion and gave the host.

I have noticed also here that in the Chapel that only the clergy and servers can enter within the sanctuary and then have to have bare feet. It must be a thing here in Sri Lanka, they take their religion and ministry very seriously here.

After the service I had a chat with the boys and girls . The Chapel was packed about 100 pupils.

I was offered coffee at Father Andrew's place, the Chaplain until January. It is Father Andrew I will be succeeding in January. The Chaplaincy is big with two bedrooms, full equipped kitchen, T.V. and other extras, but no internet access, have to go to the office for that.

After been at the Chaplains house I was sent for by the Headmaster for breakfast, his wife and daughter cooked omelettes and made toast for me.

I then was given a tour of where all the canteens, shops, offices etc.

Laundry here is cheap, to have one item washed and iron is 7p in English money. A full bag of a weeks washing cost me just over £1 which included

ironing.

I had lunch in the lower canteen, the kids loved it, the staff sit on table at the top, to everyone's surprise I went and sat among the pupils and spoke to them, they liked it, but it was not a thing that is done, they were surprised but asked me to sit with them again next time.

After lunch I just had a walk around the campus which took nearly an hour, all the kids were out doing something where ever I went. Got to basically know the background of the building set up now, where everything is, and got to know the children also.

To night I have been asked to go to the Choir practice for the Carol service, I will not be singing, just showing my face and interest.

The Chaplain will also visit me again sometime this afternoon.

After visiting the Chaplain again at 6pm we went to Chapel for Choir practice, about 50 turned up, they sang all carols in the three different language which they speak, I joined in with some they had a guitar, Hand blown organ and some other instruments, the Chapel only has a piano. When they all left Chapel they all stood in front of me each wanting a blessing before they left the Chapel which they expect from me I just said Good night to them.

I also noticed when they take communion when they kneel at the alter rail they take their shoes off and you have to put the bread (the host) on to their tongues. So serious is the matter of religion here.

After Carols at 7pm I went to have supper with the lower School ages 7 - 12. When I arrived at their last lessons before supper they all were fighting to who took me across to the canteen, their lower School is called Keble College, after they all surrounded me about 60 of them they first took me across to their dormitory where I had to inspect it for tidiness. They are very strict in discipline, it reminded me of the Victorian times, there were 2 long rooms with beds all lined up in rows with mosquito nets above each bed, when I had inspected their dormitory they led me to the canteen, they all filed in order and sat on long benches against long tables. I was given a place next to matron on head table, where they had to wait until we served out our food placed in front us.

Their food is already served out in front of them ready, after serving out my food instead of sitting at head table with matron, I insisted that I sat on the benches among the Children, they were gob-struck teachers, and matrons etc, do not do that, even matron was surprised but the children loved it, they told me afterwards that staff do not do that they eat at head table on their own.

When they had gone to their places at the tables for lunch and I stood among them as they said prayers they then all sat down together ate together in silence not a word. They had fish paste with rice which they ate with their hands. After each one had finished their meal individually they crossed themselves with the sign of the cross and waited till the last one had finished in silence with their hands together, when the last one had finished matron rang the bell they all stood up together and I had to say prayers. After that they all then filed out in order into the kitchen and washed their own plates and hands in silence, when they left the canteen they went straight to their dormitories and got dressed for bed, they had had their wash before last lesson and supper. Lights were straight out. The routine was so strict with great discipline it just really reminded me of Oliver Twist, I could not believe it and they were so young, that is one of the many things they learn which makes the College so famous, and the standard of education, mixing of culture and religions and discipline is what makes the College so great. Staff are treated with so much respect, not a word out of place from the pupil, they take their discipline and religion so seriously.

The dormitories, canteen are all old fashioned and out of date, it is really third world here, compared to what we are used to.

My aim is to have breakfast with girls and then eat lunch with the middle and higher College who eat in the higher College canteen and I have supper with the lower in Keble College, so that I can mix with all equally, I mean different days not all in one day. The girls still seem to be a bit shy yet, and blush and giggle then have that smile with shyness afterwards. The present Chaplain never eats with the children he eats at home in his accommodation.

No wonder the College is famous, its religion, discipline mixing with faiths, cultures and education is a leading example. All parents are proud to get a place for their Children at the College.

My life and work in the College and diocese is so awarding, and really as opened my eyes and made me so much more responsible and respected, especially in the third world, where things are so much different but no one ever grumbles, I think if the children here visit England and went to school here in England they would not know what to do.

There is just so much simplicity, dedication, respect, and strictness, you just can not believe it, the religion and faith here is so strong.