

THE DIARY OF MY MISSION WORK IN
SRI LANKA

Part Four/ Five

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Monday 1 December 2008.

Well here you do not need an alarm clock, each morning you get woken up with the students at 4.30am when they all get up to have a shower and observe their own prayer for their own religions, either privately or in small groups.

At 7am they all go for their breakfasts. Again like Supper strict simplicity and discipline are in order, just like I described early. This time before we went into breakfast, again at Keble College, I was shown round the classrooms by the pupils. This morning I went and sat down in with the girls for breakfast. They sit on their own on a separate table from the boys. The girls are from the age of 6 - 18

After breakfast I walked across the court yard and past the hall with the girls to Chapel which we talked about England and Netball. We have morning prayer which I conduct at 7.30am every day before 8.15am lessons. I usually get about 100 turn up.

Do not forget pupils here also belong to other religions, and have their own time of worship, even so it is a Anglican College.

I start off with a opening prayer and collect for the day then two of the pupils take a readings for the day, the same reading but in English then in Sinhalese. I then conduct short intercessions in English and try Sinhalese, then the final Prayer and closing Prayer in both English and Sinhalese if I can.

At St. Thomas' three languages are spoken, English, Sinhalese and Tamil. We try not to encourage Tamil, but accept it but try and concentrate on English more. The Anglican Church is still strong here with the Anglican connections with England. All students at School always aim to get into English Universities, life here is still very English in ways of believe and learning and way of life.

It is now 9am (3.30am in England) and I am popping round to see the headmaster in his house, he is till very poorly. At 10am I am helping with sports with the senior boys, and we will be playing football, in which I promised I would be in one of the teams. At 3pm I am playing cricket with the junior boys. But their main sport is rugby. Because I am playing sport

with the boys, the girls were put off because I would not play hockey with them instead, I promised I would play netball with them in lunch break or tomorrow.

I have just had a meeting with the headmaster and with the bishops licensing and consent my following duties when at St. Thomas College are the following.

As Chaplain under the headmaster I am responsible for all Liturgy and worship at the College Chapel, which include

Arranging the services, readings and hymns:

Morning Prayer and Compline everyday in either conducting them myself or making a routine for other clergy or ministers to conduct them.

To help conduct services every Sunday.

To arrange readings and intercession rota's.

To train all servers and readers.

To organise and lead all confirmation and Bible classes.

To arrange and lead all quiet days and devotions.

To bring the Chapel services back to the High Church standard introducing incense etc.

To lead all assembly services with prayers at all meetings.

To be responsible for pastoral care and spiritual direction to both students and tutors.

To be responsible for the welfare and living standards of the students.

As mentioned my main work is to bring English background and language in to the College, The Colleges and education here are so important in keeping and showing it's British connections.

I have be told I must keep my white cassockon at all times or wear long trousers until last lesson at 2.30pm unless I am involved in some activities or social events.

College lessons officially finish at 230pm then the afternoon is free for sport, choice of activities, Bible or what ever each pupil wishes to do.

During services I must wear my white cassockwith white band around my waist. During all services when wearing my alb, I must wear it over my black cassack, and wear the seasonal hood and girdle colours and at all times with my blue scarf. I must have bare feet with sandals at services removing my sandals when entering the sanctuary.

I can where my black cassockinstead of my white cassockif I wish, but must wear my white band round my waist at all times.

The rest of today was just keeping myself to myself in work and preparation, missed supper, due to lack of time and just not feeling well.

When I move into the Chaplain's house from my temporary accommodation I will have a proper office.

It is very important that the headmaster and myself work closely together and keep things in strict confidence in many matters.

The Chaplain is responsible for matters with the headmaster.

Tuesday 2nd of December 2008.

Did not have breakfast this morning just not feeling hungry.

In the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, as well as having their own Prayer Book they have their own Lectionary, which is more or less the same, but in some cases they do not celebrate our minor Saints days for teachers, missionaries, poets etc, but celebrate some of their own minor festivals and other minor days they keep. For example, 'Joseph Vaz, Missionary Priest in Sri Lanka' and 'Plow Day' a festival of thanksgiving for baptism, another is 'Thai Pongal - Aluth Sahal Mangalaya' which is a harvest festival (14 January). Another one is 'John Chrisostom, bishop and doctor from Constantinople' on the 26 January which we do not celebrate in England, so you have to check the lectionary every day. 'Epinaetus the first Asia's gifts to the Church' and 'Young Peoples day and inauguration of the Presbytery of Lanka', are others they are also holiday's they celebrate like 'Ananias Day - non violence day' and 'Saints and Martyrs Day for the East'. and so on. Quite a lot of these are also bank holidays, between 3-4 days each month.

At St. Thomas' College we speak three Languages, English is encourage as the main language followed by Sinhalese which I am encourage to learn and speak. Services and lessons are done in both, but English more often. Tamil is the third language, but this is minor and really not encouraged even so it is spoken and used.

I Missed lunch, but later on went for a walk into the village of Gurutalawa, which starts just outside the School gates. It really just consists on one long street with 14 shops and places of residence, about the population of 400. Again most residents on the main street have a stall in front of their house selling something, to make a living. It also consists of a Muslim Junior School. But when referring to the name of Gurutalawa, people are referring to St. Thomas College, rather than the village which is not really known.

There are four Anglican Public Schools in Sri Lanka of high esteem, St. Thomas', Gurutalawa, St. Thomas', Mount Lavinia (founded by the

Bishop of Colombo) St. Thomas' ,Kollupitiya and St. Thomas',
Bandarawela.

It is a honour for any pupil to enter any of these four Schools. Gurutalawa is the largest in area and most isolated, but not the largest in number of pupils but is in Staff. Because of its location and surroundings labour staff, farmers and servants etc are employed.

I have been asked to arrange the Carol service for this Friday with Father Andrew, So I am making a programme out in the form of the Nine Lessons and Carols. Apparently a former Dean of King's College, Cambridge became Bishop of Colombo in the 1950s and brought the tradition with him to Sri Lanka, especially to St. Thomas' College, it was in fact the Dean of King's College, Cambridge, before him who was Dean Eric Milner White later Dean of York who was credited of been the founder of the Nine lessons and Carols when he was Dean of King's College, where it first was performed, and where it is still performed worldwide today, especially from King's College, Cambridge where it televised every Christmas Eve.

My health seems to be keeping up but had a few minor concerns with my chest pains.

The pressure is building up and I really know the game I have to face. So much to do with all my duties.

Never seem to have enough hours in the day. Could go on telling you more, but I am now only really able to say bits because there is so much. Finished off having supper at Keble College, the lower College. In fact I learnt to day that a Chaplain at St. Thomas' in the 1930s was a Rev. Keble who was related to a past Vicar John Robert Keble at Bishopthorpe, and naturally therefore descended from the John Keble the Oxford Movement founder with Newman and co., so a small world, and that is where the lower College gets its name from.

Wednesday 3rd December 2008.

Today just felt so tired. Most of the day just preparation for the next term, the students are still taking their exams. Had breakfast at Keble College, this morning, followed by just running around to the office, having a meeting with the headmaster, and doing this and that.

I have been invited with the Headmaster to the Keble College Christmas Party at 5pm. The Keble College consists of the junior boys and all the girls. The girls were already asking me what food I could eat, because they

were preparing it, they know that I can not eat spicy food and have a strict diet because of my medication and illness I have, just shows that even the pupils have concern for me.

I have said my health had improved, and yes it is improving on the whole, but the last couple of days, I must admit I have been suffering a little more with my breathing.

The headmaster had me around to his place again for breakfast and talk, and is very impressed and delighted that I have the same views in worship, pastoral care and other duties which he does. He too is very Anglo Catholic so he is very happy with my arrangements and programmes, He even surprised me with saying that he wants the good old Church tradition back into the College life and the Chapel. At last he announced I have found a Chaplain who has my views and I can trust and leave to get on with things. The only thing he asked was that I organised High Mass with incense for the first Sunday of each month and other festivals. This has not happened here for some years due to lack of dedication of and views of past Chaplains We have a lot in common and the same views which is very good, he too is very much into the Oxford Movement, the traditional worship, and many other things. The only difference we have in view which surprised me is that he is in favour of women priest where I am not. There is really only one other minor thing I struggle with, that is that he would rather us use the Sri Lankan lectionary rather than the Common Worship lectionary, but I think that is to do with the bishop, because he told me that he would leave it up to me to twist things a little in the services, he does have all the books and interest in the book of Common Worship. He took his degrees at Cuddesdon, so need I say more, all I need to say is that Cuddesdon in Oxford is probably the most Anglo Catholic of learning in Oxford. The headmaster himself even uses the books 'Festivals' and 'Times and Seasons' sister books to the Worship of Common Worship. The headmaster gave me some leaflets to look at which had been sent to him.

One issue we was sent was information about Parenting, raising your children and stress problems, we were sent letters giving details of the diocesan views and all the finance costs and training. He told me I was responsible in the welfare and Spiritual guidance, so I should read it. Each morning he calls me round for an hour (when I get a hour free) There is a lot business talk in confidence.

The headmaster just leaves things to me in many cases to make decisions and sort things about Chapel.

Next year I will also be helping teach as a standby when needed.

The headmaster is even discussing personal matters of the College with me in confidence.

Tomorrow we are having the main College Carol service and dinner and party afterwards, he told me all the important people who were coming and his views on them, who to watch because of this problem and that, which obviously I can not go into.

THE KEBLE COLLEGE DEPARTMENT AND GIRLS CHRISTMAS PARTY.

Well where do I start, the organisations and ideas of parties here are so different and plain.

The headmaster his wife, myself and the 9 teaching staff including head of the junior and girls department were formally invited.

The party which was held in one of the big dormitories, where Chairs were set out in front for the 14 guests, we walked in and was shown to our seats with dignity the appointed senior girl pupils never left your side and made sure you had everything. They have so much dignity, respect, simplicity and manners, not like our schools. They fear their staff and honour them with great respect, if a teacher says shh, complete silence in a second, no one even dare cough never mind whisper.

We were shown to our seats at the front of the dormitories while all the other juniors and girls sat on the beds behind, not a word from the pupils, we had to sit and listen to a tape of carols for five minutes. Then the girls brought in a big table between them with their food which they had been making, they felt so honoured and pleased that they perform such a duty, it was like they were serving royalty. Then each of the guests were taken to the table we helped ourselves, the headmaster first then myself and the other staff and the headmasters wife. We sat back in our chairs with our food and ate it in silence, not a word from one child behind us. Then what was left the children with great dignity shared between themselves eating in silence, while we sat and listened to the music. After I had given thanks for the invitation and given the closing prayer, the headmaster left, but then the music went up and the dancing started. There was quite a large part of the dormitory which had empty space so that they could dance. It was fun. Even Santa visited and gave sweets to the Children, I do not mean the real Santa.

Thursday 4th December 2008

Today was the Main Christmas Carol Service in the Chapel at 5pm. So all day was making sure everything was right, checking the Chapel were the girls were decorating it with flowers, and the boys putting the finishing touches to the music, the crib and other things. The lessons were all read in English the carols were a variety sung in English, Sinhalese and Tamil. I gave the bidding prayer, and collects. The headmaster gave the final blessing.

After the service all the pupils lined the long road in silence from the chapel to the dining hall with burning torches of fire while the clergy and guests filed by to the dining hall. In the dining hall we ate well, too much for me in fact. All the students and staff ate together. After lunch we all filed to the main Hall for the evening party and entertainment. Not everything went to plan, which is no surprise. There was dancing by the girls, entertainment by the younger boys, band playing by the senior boys, all the staff also took part in pass the parcel on stage, and lots of other things also. Santa again visited and gave presents out to all the staff and pupils, the hall was packed, some of the student's parents came. The Headmaster, myself and governors and senior staff sat on the front row on stage. I did take some photos so there will be chance to see what I am trying to explain what the evening was like.

I was exhausted by the end of the night.

Not going to go into great detail here of the nights entertainment, but I have good photos.

Friday 5 December 2008

The morning was quiet, no Morning Prayer in the Chapel, the Keble College and girls were going home today, I took some photos of the Chapel after breakfast, to add to my collection of photos. During the day it was just quiet, had time to catch up with preparation and rest. At 7pm The outgoing Chaplain myself and Father Goodchild were invited to supper at the Headmasters house. Afterwards I was told it was our job to go and inspect the three senior dormitories. It is normally the Headmaster's job, but he is still not too well so I was asked to help, with the Headmasters wife, other staff were also invited.

The boys from each of the three dormitories lay some food on and do a little act and decorate the rooms. I was told by the headmaster before hand, they take great pride in doing this, and just want to impress you. They save up bits of their spending money and with help from their parents to

provide the small buffet. Each dormitory which we had to visit had something different. The first dormitory they were waiting for us with balloons of flower above the doors. The Headmaster the following day laughed and knew about this trick but never told me, in fact it was really his wife who got the full force of it. What I did get caught it did not really show on my white cassock. They introduced themselves and turned the lights of to show us with great pride of the tree they had put up with its lights, after showing us the lights on the Christmas Tree they offered us drink and buns etc. I gave a closing prayer before we left.

All these three dormitories are placed in the quadrangle at the east end of the Chapel, it is entered through a beautiful stone carved gateway into the green which fills the centre. It is just like the cloisters in a Cathedral or College at Cambridge or Oxford. The Chapels takes up the east side whilst the dormitories run the length of the west, north and south, there is also a covered walk way right round like in the Cathedrals.

The second inspection of the dormitories (the west cloisters) again consisted of a beautiful tree they liked to show with great pride, showing us how they kept their newly decorated dormitory, they provided a lovely spread again, and did a short act with Santa Clause. I then had to give a speech and prayer before leaving for the final inspection of the last dormitory. Again great pride was shown to us for the decorations and tree, and again a buffet. A prayer was said before we left. All together there were 12 staff who visited each dormitory.

I was so moved to see how serious they took organising this, and how much they want to be proud of what they had done, they take great delight in showing credit to their staff. They all were so proud of their trees and the buffet they had set out. The thing that even impressed me more is that they never compete which other to who can have the best dormitory and set up for the evening, they all do something different so they do not clash. If only I had more time to tell you about the work, atmosphere and set out at this College, you would really see what this fantastic College is like and what its pupils are like. I cannot believe the respect, discipline, routine and work which occurs here. They are also proud of their College, they even have a College anthem which they proudly sing each day.

Saturday 6th December 2008.

Not really a lot to say today, I set of from St. Thomas' College, back for Colombo, on the old clapped out College bus, it seemed unsafe just

looking at it, would like to see the faces of the students if one of our new National Express buses turned up to take them back to Colombo. It is only 95 miles back to Colombo from St. Thomas' the route we took, but it took 8 hours, with the traffic, bad roads, and the ups and downs of the road and the condition of the bus, not surprising. The views are breathtaking you can see like just little dots in the valleys which are houses, because you are that far up. Also very scary especially when the bus turns a sudden corner with a clank and strain when changing gear and your view is 1000s of feet drop in front of you.

But I have never heard of any bad stories of disasters, I spent the time just with my eyes closed hoping that I would open them again, it is really scary, especially when the teacher is hanging out of the door waving his hand to let the lorry in front know that we are going to overtake, on a bend overlooking the cliff edge. The bus just toots its horn in case anything is coming in the opposite direction which it cannot see. HONEST, I am not joking.

So spent the rest of the night in my room back at the Cathedral trying to get my heart beat back to normal. Even woke up twice with nightmares of my journey.

[Sunday 7th December 2008.](#)

Nothing to really report, spent all day in bed with sickness sun stroke, and again my legs are swollen up with mosquito bites. Feeling very dizzy, drowsy and weak, had a terrible night.

[Monday 8th December 2008.](#)

Today I went to the 730am Communion service which was conducted by one of the Canons of Colombo in the North side Chapel. I then set about some more prep work. I decided to go for a walk further up town, but it started to pour down, and when it pours down it really pours down. It is a real quiet day, not much to tell. I bumped into the bishop today in the diocesan office, when I popped in to collect some papers and reports. The bishop commented why I was not wearing my cassock, I told him that it was still in the wash after I spilt curry down it at the St. Thomas' Party, Gurutalawa before I left. He replied 'O man you are not meant to wash curry out, you should leave it on so you get that wonderful smell of curry everywhere you go' then laughed and went into his study without saying

another word. It was my turn to lead prayers for the office staff at 9am before they start work. Each day at 9am and when they leave at 4pm one of the ministers conducts prayers.

So at the moment I am lost without my Cassock and only alb, the alb also got the same treatment as the Cassock, into the washing machine. At the moment I am been given an alb by one of the canons, at least my scarf is clean.

Today I have also found a good Chinese restaurant, I love Chinese food, so I promised I would try it out with Sanda this weekend if I get chance.

Still need to get a mobile phone, tried several times of buying one on my own, but not sure, so did not buy them. Both Sanda and the Bishop have said wait till we are with you before you get one.

I have also been told that the Chaplains house at St. Thomas' Gurutalawa is been decorated and put into order for me for when I return in January, new, cooker, microwave, fridge, and some furniture. It also as a guest room so if anyone ever wants to visit do please come, there are also plenty of other rooms on campus. But you must remember St. Thomas' College is in the middle of nowhere even so it is in the most beautiful area for hills, mountains and woodland which surround the College, it takes hours just getting here through all the small winding roads up and down the hills, again an adventure seeing the views on the way. So If you like peace quiet and a College background well here is the place. But do not forget we are in the real third world here. Polecats running through the loft and perhaps finding a snake curled up in the shower on a morning. Seen a few crocs walking across the road, but they are only small and armless unless you tease them, and many other experiences you will have to face. The College also possesses a good swimming pool you can use (outside) it's own shops and Chapel etc, so it is like a village in away. Sometimes you may find some sort of living thing in the pool but you just fish it out before jumping in. The water is very clear, so you can see if it is clear of reptiles and crocs! lol first. The students are always in the pool, they have tempted me a couple of times in getting in, but not yet succeeded.

[Tuesday 9th December 2008.](#)

This morning the 730am Communion Service was in the North side Chapel and taken by one of the Vicars from a parish in Colombo. The weather is scorching hot today, and I am having real problems with mosquitoes again and bugs and this and that crawling over me during the

night, I always sleep with the light on, and spend half the night awake. This last 3-4 days I have not been too well, with my illness and heat, but I am coping, and also learning to live a complete new way of life, yes I am a new person, half of you will not recognise me by personality or looks when I come home for holiday, yes a complete new Mike Grace I hate all these mosquito bites and itches from other bugs I keep getting, they must love English blood.

After Chapel I had to check a few things out at the diocesan office again, I bumped into the Archdeacon who had been speaking with the bishop about getting me measured up for a couple of new white cassocks for back ups. There is a place just up the road. They are made to order, but my shock was that they only are priced at £15 each and they are the better ones. Just shows how cheap things are here. I brought a new toaster for just £3 last week.

So tomorrow I am going into town to order a couple of new cassocks. I am loving it out here so much, the first time I have never felt home sick, but again I have a challenge, respect and something to work for which I have never had like this before, so it makes a big difference. I still do have Bishopthorpe in the back of my head and other places, and miss them a little, but now with my life changed, sorry to say back home is a little dull for me, I really needed this change so much, and wow I feel so important and respected and responsible.

Tried a Special Fried Rice Chicken today, honest they really make stuff so different here, the curries are in a class of their own to the dull Indian curries you get from the take a-ways in England. But again everything is curry here, even the cornflakes taste spicy, if you order a egg of any sort, fried, boiled or whatever it is spiced up, just like in the Caribbean, perhaps it is all the chickens eating curry seed that makes them lay curried flavour eggs lol. One thing I tend to enjoy a lot which I seem to have to much of is the Cream Soda and Ginger Beer, yes I said ginger beer not John Smith's beer. They have egg plant beer also. The problem here is the ice cream is nice but within 1 minute you have to eat it or it is just liquid. You can not leave butter out of the fridge for more than 1 minute or it just warms up and starts melting everywhere.

Everything here just smells or tastes of curry, even when you kiss the women it tastes like curry, when kissing the women I must taste dull to them. One thing does impress me though in all the time I have been here, in the streets and crowds of people I have not yet seen one person smoking, in fact I have not come across a shop which sell the stuff for

smoking.

Wednesday 10th December 2008.

Struggling with eating but I am drinking lots of water but this is still not helping me function well. Attended the 730 Communion service today in the South side Chapel which was taken by the Archdeacon of Jaffna. He is a really nice chap and his English speech is perfect. He is 7ft but quite well built around his shoulders.

The last few days most of the senior School choirs have been practicing in the Cathedral for Christmas carols, and they are really good, they sound like the old English Cathedral choirs, all the carols have been mostly the old traditional carols sung in English. It is a real pleasure listening to them. I can hear them from my room or from the diocesan office.

There are a lot of Carol services as well as all the other Christmas services, it is quite a large Cathedral and can seat over a thousand easy. There is no pulpit, the bishop believes everyone been on the same level when talking, but it makes it difficult even with a microphone in getting your words over to people who you cannot really see because of this situation. My sermons I have prepared are only ten minutes long, so I speak really slow to stretch them out to 15 minutes, they like that so they can understand my accent, so it is a bonus, some cheeky sods thought I was Scottish, soon put them right, what an insult.

Again just been admiring that crazy traffic just so unbelievable to explain. Today the old buses rushing by hooting their horns with people hanging out by holding on to the outside of the windows, and even better than that more people hanging on to them by their shirts, so like in away two rows of people hanging on the side of the bus, and this is rush hour with all other cars etc just hooting their horns and weaving in and out of the traffic with each other.

Also saw a motorcyclist burning down the inside of the traffic, not just wearing no helmet, but also had two of his children on the bike, one sat on the handle bars facing the driver, while the driver of the motorcycle himself was trying to watch round the child to see where he was going, The other child hanging on for life behind him, again no helmet.

Tonight had a early night, but still did not get to sleep till about 2am in the morning. The problem was these funny looking lizards would not leave me alone. They are only about 4 inches long and harmless, but the just make you feel nervous.

Thursday 11th December. 2008.

So tired just did not get up until 8pm so missed Communion. Went straight to the diocesan office, the bishop asked me to his office, and said we must get another white cassock for you, seeing that you are always spilling things down it, he also told me the other one I had, which I was wearing still stinks of curry even so it looked cleaner, so one of his staff took me to the local fabric shop in his Tut Tut, which I feel unsafe in, to the fabric shop. We buy the material for about 2000 rupees which is £10 then take it to St Michael's Church where the nuns there make up cassocks for you for free. So a new cassock perfect fitting and professional job for £10 - £15, not like my other one I brought with me from England which cost me £150, wow what a difference, and the one's from here are even better when they are made.

Because we where our white cassocks all the time, and they are white we really need two or three. Get bad comments if I wear my traditional black cassock which I like.

Went to the senior School's of Colombo Carol service tonight, over 1000 people packed the Cathedral more than a York City Football match on a good day. What a brilliant atmosphere. The singing was first class with the organ and the echoing of the sound of the great organ it sounds great. I sneaked in halfway through and sat at the back, and sneaked out during the last hymn which was Silent Night, they always seem to like Silent Night for the last hymn rather than Emmanuel etc as we like to use. And they always turn the lights out, while they sing it everyone lighting a candle. But again if you read the story about how the carol of Silent Night came about, it is very fitting, sorry chaps have not time to tell that story for now. Before I went to the service I visited Father Ashley who also lives in the Cathedral close, his wife adjusted the length of my cassock a little, while Father Ashley and I had a drink.

I just continually have sweat pouring of me all day, I looked into the mirror this morning with horror, my face looks so thin, I look so different, but again sweat is just pouring down my face all the time.

I never wear anything but my shorts under the cassock, just so hot.

Gurotalawa is a little cooler than Colombo, in fact a lot cooler.

For my supper tonight I had like this snack bones, they are like a bacon fry but bigger and harder. They are Hot and Spicy. They are made of Ribbon Pakada, do not ask what that is, cos I have not a clue. A full 250g bag costs 14p. They are a big meal. Anyway going to sign off for now.

Friday 12th December 2008.

Found I could not sleep at all during the night because of the heat, even with the fan on just could not settle.

Woke up about 5am after eventually falling asleep at 4am.

Attended the 730am Communion service in the South chapel of the Cathedral, which was conducted by Father Malinda.

When leaving the Cathedral I noticed everything so quiet, no traffic or people, then I discovered it was yet another Public Holiday, that is the third Public Holiday, (as they call them) since I arrived on 17 November. They just never seem to be no stopping Public Holidays here. I search through all the lectionaries and other papers to see which Holiday it was but could not find anything so it must be a Hindu festival or some other religious festival.

Really I think Gordon Brown, yes our Prime Minister I mean, should count the Bank Holidays (or Public Holidays as they call them here) It might just make him scratch his head and think about the bank holiday system in England.

But again he might just scratch his head and think that the Sri Lankan's are crazy and should think about their holiday system here.

So far I have counted 38 public holidays we have here compared with our 10.

Been feeling really slow, drowsy, not eating and so weak. Today went to the diocesan 'Nine Lessons and Carols' It consisted of the famous three choirs in the diocese, who have been practicing in the Cathedral all week as mentioned.

The Methodist Girls College Choir, they were all in their green College uniforms (secondary College) then there was the famous Trinity College, Kandy boys Choir all in their red cassocks and white Roman surplices, (the late Bishop Young of Ripon) was a teacher and Chaplain here as well as a lecturer at Kandy Theological College, that is why there is a diocesan connection to the diocese of Ripon of Leeds. And then the famous Choir of St. Anthony's College in their beautiful gold gowns and College colours running round the cuffs and collars.

The Choirs all sang individual and sometimes combined. They were fantastic, what sound and the magnificent organ they have in the Cathedral. The echo round the large spacious Cathedral gave it that unique sound.

Today had to also visit St Michael's and All Angels Church and College,

which I will tell you about tomorrow because I am just feeling so ill at the moment. I had to leave the service early and a few people noticed I left early not looking too good. I crawled back to my room, really not feeling well. An hour later I heard a knock on the door, it was the bishop who was checking up on me. He had been for his half hour evening jog round the Cathedral grounds, he looked quite funny in his shorts, tee shirt, sweating.

[Saturday 13 December 2008.](#)

Yesterday went to St. Michael's and All Angels Church, Colombo, This is supposedly THE Church in Colombo, it was one of the first Anglican Churches to be built here, and the architecture the furniture etc is just like a English Parish Church. As most cases in the other Parish Churches, all the past clergy were English men and a number of the clergy who came from England to this parish returned to England to be Archdeacons and Bishops.

This Church here at St. Michael's and All Angels, again is supposed to be THE main and highest of the Anglo Catholic Churches in Sri Lanka, like All Saints Church in North Street, York.

The Church is like a big monastery with cloisters The main Church is massive then there are 3 massive side Chapels the Side Chapels themselves are like average sized parish Churches, there are many halls and open greens surrounded with more cloisters and rooms and rooms of accommodation, it is like a set out of the Abbeys and monasteries in England before Henry VIII pulled them down. The whole place is very Anglo Catholic looking, 6 candle sticks on the alter, statues of the Virgin Mary, the smell of incense everywhere, private prayer going on all the time. I must try and get some photos next time I go.

VOCATION

Sorry for not writing much for Saturday or Sunday, have been very ill for the last couple of days with virus bug, nothing to do with my general illness, just a virus. Could not get out of bed till Sunday Evening. My last movement before that was going to Communion in the South Side Chapel at 730am in the Cathedral on the Saturday, Father Malinda took the Service.

The bishop got whiff of my illness and came to see me on Sunday night at

about 8pm, he felt so stressed and unhappy and felt that he had neglected me. We had a long discussion in my room. He told me this will never happen again, he is just like a Father to me. When he realised I had not eaten for four days and was not getting the right food he was deeply upset and said this will not do, you are a guest, and you will be looked after better than this. He told me that for the next few days he will send me to the Holy Convent up the road in Colombo where I will be fed proper English food and cared for a few days until I get well.

In the meantime if I have any problems I have to ring him, he gave me his mobile number. I have to report to him during the morning He makes me breakfast and in the Evening the Archdeacon cooks for me. He also left me a parcel of biscuits and fruit and milk for tonight.

He was unhappy that I did not turn to him when I was ill or needed something and for him to find out through other sources that I was not well upset him. He really felt that he had neglected me. It put me in an embarrassing position.

If you did not know him when you met him, you would never guess he was a clergyman never mind a bishop. While I am writing this I am eating the food he had sent me, and I am stuffed. Like I have said before the bishop is one of the most understanding, caring and supporting men you can come across. All the time in the diocese and at St. Thomas' I am just treated with so much respect and love.

Monday 15th December 2008.

I have persuaded the Bishop for me to remain here at the Cathedral instead of going to the Convent. The bishop gave me boiled eggs, bread and jam for breakfast. Then I went to the diocesan office with him, where I checked my emails and topped up my mobile phone. I then went to the Cathedral to listen to the diocesan Choirs practicing for tonight's Carol Service. The diocese have 4 different choirs, two of them tonight will be performing the Carol Service. I will take some photos of the choirs singing. I must admit the choirs here are so dedicated and really good. The young choir consists of 6 year olds, and they just sing their heart out, I just wish so much that I could even tape them singing, but at least I will get some photos.

After Christmas I will get copies of my photo album on to CD and send them to you by post, so please let me have your address if you are interested. But it will not be until January when I get back to Gurutalawa. I have just found out, after a check up with the doctor some of my problem

in the last few days was my heart also. So I have been told to slow down. With the heat, the responsibilities and the first time I have experienced some of this ministry work and also getting used to a new culture, and way of life and ministry, it apparently is affecting me a little now, which I did not expect it would with such a flying start, which was probably excitement, but now the heels are dug into the soil well and truly, and therefore, it is now beginning to show.

At long last, not to my doing, I met the long dreading point of meeting the retired Bishop of Colombo, Bishop Swithin Fernando which I have mentioned earlier. I was walking by when he shouted me over, and asked me why I had not been to see him.

He actually seemed quite a nice interesting person, whether he was in a good mood, or else the others had been telling me little fibs about him been strict.

But I must admit I have lost some weight and gone thinner in my face, my face looks well tanned and my bags under my eyes have more or less gone, a lot of people think I am in my mid thirties, - okay brag, brag - but its true and I am proud of it. With my thinned face and tan, my hair does not seem to look so grey for some reason.

Back to the choirs, again I am now listening to them practice which I can hear quite clearly from my room. They are really beautiful and so powerful in sound.

Well here I am again, just got back from the Carol Service in the Cathedral.

The Carol Service tonight was absolutely fantastic the singing and arrangements were top class. Both choirs sang to the best, and what voices they had. The Younger people performed the act of the Magi during the carols, with angel, shepherds and kings and even dressed up as lambs, well I presumed that is what they were, you will have to see when you see the photos I took. The congregation was 1500 and the choirs totalled to 86 in numbers, what a turn out, even so thrashing rain, lightening and roaring thunder took place throughout the service, I mean outside not inside!

I was sat at the front naturally in my white cassock which we wear more or less all the time. I was so relaxed enjoying the service been one of hundreds taking photographs. The choir and readers of the lessons were certainly in the limelight they must of thought that they were Hollywood stars, or should I say over here, Bollywood stars.

Everything was running so smoothly when they realised that the Archdeacon was not sat in the congregation, who was down to take

Benediction, prayers and blessings, so in the last hymn I, who was only a part of the congregation, was pulled a side and told it was in my hands, I nearly fainted, did not do my heart much good, I had done no preparation, had no prayer books or information with me I just looked at my camera clutched in my hand the only thing I did have as well as my service sheet and thought now what do I do. To face going on to 1800 people packed in a massive Cathedral with no notes nothing at all I froze in terror now only 5 verses to go. During the last verse I made my way to the lection and waited in terror for the hymn to finish. The echo of the organ died out after the last triumphant verse, At last silence nearly 1800 people's eyes were on me.

The Archdeacon told me later he knew nothing about been expected to take the prayers and blessing, he told me they just assumed I would be in the congregation with my wife. They must prepare and ask in advance next time. He smiled at me and told me I had saved the day - but I too nearly did not get there with other things to do.

God must have been on my side, the words I spoke just flowed out with no problems as if God was speaking himself, I felt no fear just relaxed and at ease and felt as they say 'very cool' God must have thought I had been a good boy today so saved me.

My work was done, and everyone was happy that was the main thing.

[Tuesday 16th December 2008.](#)

Missed Communion this morning just had a bad night with chest pains and blood pressure again, yes I seemed to be OK earlier which I commented but I am now beginning to feel the strain of my work with its various commitments.

Bumped into both the Bishop and Archdeacon who were together.

You have probably now noticed I did not get off to the convent for a rest as organised, this was partly because I refused to go, I have too much work to do. Not just that but it paid off for example like the incident of last night, if I had not been at the Cathedral there would have been panic.

Good news the diocesan staff party on Friday.

Had a slow walk up the road but admit I felt very tired and dizzy again, but very very hot, when I got back it was just like somebody had been throwing buckets of water over me, I have never sweat so much in my life after coming here, especially in Colombo. In Gurutalawa it is much cooler - so they say, still too hot for me.

The meals that the archdeacon and the bishops cook for me each day are really British, and I feel so much comfortable.

I have been told that Bishop Swithin Fernando is always asking where I am, they say he seems to like me. Spent some time in the diocesan office in the education department organising which books I will need for confirmation classes. I was very surprised to discover that as well as the 16 week course they have to complete which they have to attend before they can be confirmed they have to take a further 8 week course afterwards which include, Ethics and relationships, other religions, Ideologies and ecumenism, social responsibilities, and they are just the headings, everything here in Sri Lanka in religion is taken so seriously, with pride, understanding, love and dedication in what they learn. Confirmation is such a big thing for them, to take their own vows before they take the sacrament, I am so proud to see such faith and pride, and see them see the reason for confirmation and understand what it means first. A bit like in the old days in England, not like now where it is taken as granted, anyone can take the sacrament and not know or understand anything about the real meaning or give great pride in taking their vows first, before taking the sacrament, I feel a lot can be learnt from here about pride, understanding and seriousness of religion and its liturgy.

[Wednesday 17th December. 2008](#)

This morning was the Clergy Synod for Colombo. We all met in the North Chapel for Communion at 730pm which was conducted by the Archdeacon. The Bishop and 13 clergy with 7 other congregation sat in the congregation.

After the service we all (clergy and ministers) went back for breakfast which was curry, yes everything is just curry, all I ate was bananas. They all eat with their hands.

The other day he commented 'It is only right that we should respect all the five religions in the land of Sri Lanka, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Cricket' I thought hello now what is he going on about, then he said to us 'that reminds us we must form our diocesan Cricket team, The religion which is lacking in my eyes'.

When ever he tries and cracks a joke and someone says something back better or overthrows his joke, he reminds us that he is bishop and he tells the jokes.

During the afternoon I went shopping with one of the diocesan staff to the

supermarket to buy odd things like new knives, spoons and pans etc, and yes we came across the beer section, which like I mentioned you do not see often around here. So we did get a couple of beers.

In the evening all the ministers and their family with children met up at the diocesan house and waited outside for the travelling lorry of Carol singers. This is a group of about 18 adults in their 20s mostly women who fight for peace between North and South of the Island, otherwise the fighting caused by the Tamil Tigers. They all belong to the same Church at Harbour Bay (Anglican) what they were doing tonight were sitting on the wagon, all beautifully decorated stopping at certain points and singing carols. They were good. The only thing was when they were travelling from place to place they had to be escorted by a police car and other government guards, not because they might be attacked, they would never do that, but they may just be awkward people who disagree and try and block the way or hold up the wagon in protest. With the police and government force present nothing like that would happen, the police and government forces here are very strict, they do not take nonsense from you if you upset them. The government force certainly show their presence everywhere, you just see them stood up the roads and every so often there are patrol boxes on the side of the road, All big buildings even including every Church, Supermarket have Government Patrol outside. Even the Cathedral have their own government approved security guards on the gates 24 hours a day to protect the Cathedral grounds and its many buildings.

Once you get out into the country they even have check points and even villages have their own patrol.

Never think as Sri Lanka as a holiday resort because it is not, it is very poor and strict with government. Even so you never really seem to have any trouble.

Sometimes you may even see some of the guards stop cars, buses etc at random and make everyone get out and check them over.

Thursday 18th December 2008.

It sounds so silly, however tired you are you just cannot seem to sleep, even with a fan on, that horrible sticky hot weather just stops you from laying still. Again at about 230am the weather just seems to cool down then you just chill out to sleep. So I have now learnt to work till about 2am then go to sleep.

I still seem to get a lot of chest pains and breathing difficulties which can

also stop me from sleeping.

I still have not yet really had a normal night's sleep, my routine of life on the whole has just changed. Times of work, sleep, eating, getting used to the climate, peoples habits and life styles, it just really messes your rhythm of the way of life you are used to.

Went to the 730am service this morning in the South Chapel which was taken by the bishop, and today met the former Dean of Colombo, when he retired the Deanery was then annexed to the archdeaconry and held by one person.

Really it as been a very quiet day, just spent all day preparing and setting out projects and making other arrangements for the new term at St. Thomas' Gurutalawa.

Tonight seems very hot, but plenty of rain and thunder and lightning. The thunder just cracks and is really loud, makes you jump because it just cracks so sharp and loud, in between this sudden sharp cracks it just keeps rumbling away continually, in fact it is fascinating to listen to.

[Friday 19 December 2008.](#)

Went to Communion this morning in the South Chapel of the Cathedral. After Chapel went to the diocesan office to get some more material I need for preparation at St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. I later went to see Father Ashley, one of the retired priests, we like to have a good old theological discussion. We had a good discussion on our thoughts on baptism and confirmation, how we should go about confirmation and disagreements and agreements about taking the sacrament etc. We also discussed the our thoughts about the consecrating of the sacrament whether the priest should face east away from the congregation or not. Also discussed the life and pupils ways of going about things at St. Thomas's College, Gurutalawa.

At St. Thomas' College in the past there has been problems, because the different cultures, faiths and worship, how they coped and worked with each other, 50% of pupils also came from country families who lived in quiet villages, and so found it difficult to mix with those from the larger towns.

Even today, there is still a little friction which is obviously. I have been told and know, that my post will be a challenge.

After a good long chat, it was time to go back and get ready for party time. We are having the diocesan office party in the Chapter Hall, the staff will

also bring their children.

I am feeling a lot better, but the heat problem and mosquitoes tend to be a big problem. I feel so slow and tired at the moment. Gurutalawa is so much better for climate, so much cooler, even the kids sometimes wear their jumpers and hats.

Well must go for now - Party Time.

[Saturday 20 December 2008.](#)

Party went quite well last night. I also had a good night's sleep, so stayed in bed this morning. The bishop comes round most nights to check on me. The Party was well in to swing of things last night, we started by singing carols round the tree in the Chapter house.

The Chapter house is very beautiful and at one end there is a lovely carved platform with a bishop's throne placed in the middle. All around the Chapter house are full length portraits of the past 14 bishops of Colombo starting of with the first bishop and working clockwise with all the rest in order. Only the last four have not been British.

After we had sung carols we then watched the children play games while we chatted with each other. The bishop joined in with some games. Then yes no surprise Santa came in with his bag. It seems to be a thing round here that whenever Santa enters a party he seems to come in throwing sweets everywhere.

It was so much fun to see the young children's faces when he came in some shaking with wide open eyes trying to hide behind their father's or mother's legs hang onto them for life.

After all of the presents had been given out to the young children, then we all ate. A massive layout of curries and rice. I gave it a miss and waited till later for ice cream, even so the bishop encouraged me to eat a little, which I had a couple of mouth full, but this only made me feel rather ill and put me off my ice cream.

After my ice cream I sneaked out and went to bed.

It seemed a little cooler during the night and I slept better.

During the day I went shopping to this massive supermarket, about a five minute ride in a Tut Tut away. I have never seen such a large supermarket in my life, it had everything you can think of from food, to furniture, garden stuff, you name it was there, and the jackpot, it even had a small bar with beer on pump the first I had seen. The supermarket was really modern and top quality, which gave me a shock with the area it was in.

The largest I had ever seen.

I got bits and bats which I needed, but enjoyed the experience of the size and set out.

Sunday 21 December 2008

Getting nearer to Christmas, but not really feel like it in away, in some ways wish I was at home where I chill out with family and friends, especially a few nice quiet drinks in the local in front of the log fire. But life moves on and God takes you where he needs you, so here I am stuck away from my family in a strange place.

Two new deacons were ordained last month and are on vocation with the Archdeacon, so seem to be getting a share in duties for the services. Still seem to be having problems with my health a little which I must admit is worrying me, I feel somewhat so different in a way, cannot explain, perhaps some of it is just the climate, new way of life, complete new people, no old friends or family around.

Did not go to service this morning because I felt so odd and lost. Thank goodness I was not on duty.

Tonight I am involved in the Carol Service and have been invited afterwards to a evening meal with the choir, but to be honest today, I just do not feel with it, so tired and I just do not seem to be able to focus at the moment.

To be honest I cannot wait to get back to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa where my main work and responsibilities are and where I can get stuck in. I have a mole mark or birth mark near my tummy button, but it seems to have suddenly grown in size about four times its normal size, so I am a little concerned and my ankles seem to be also swelling up off and on. To be honest at this very moment I feel a bit lost even so I have new friends, it is not the same though without been at home in your own patch with family and old friends. I can afford to come home only once in the next two years so deciding whether to come home for Easter which is also my birthday, or during the summer or next Christmas, wish I could afford two lots of air travel.

I am very tight on budget, and with airfare £700 return I will only be visiting home once not twice which I had planned for.

Seem to find it difficult to keep in touch by email. The internet here is so poor and so slow and hard to get on to. So I feel I am letting my friends down by not emailing them regularly.

The other weakness here is that the electricity is very poor, very often you get power cuts, especially when it rains, which I must admit it does rain often, but when it does it really rains always with thunder and lightning. It is now 1.40pm here which is 8.20am in England. Normally I would now be at 8am Communion service at Bishopthorpe Church.

Monday 22 December.

I have to be honest and admit, I do not really feel well, and really struggling with eating anything now, I have even found an English Pastry shop which do lovely chicken pies, Cornish pasties, but even now I have got to the stage where I have even lost interest in that. I love marmite on toast, but even that turns my stomach up now. My whole body is just out of sequence it is just so confused. But must admit when I do get to sleep I have good nights, I tend to wake up at about 3am but soon fall asleep again and wake up at what some would still call early 8am.

This is really good on the whole except it will be no good for when I get back to St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. Must start getting used to getting up earlier again, which sounds daft after I have now got to the stage where I need good rest

The bishop came round to see me again he is really nice, but he has such a sense of humour and straight face that you can not tell whether he is teasing you or not.

You have probably noticed that I have not mentioned the Morning services in the Cathedral during the week which I usually mention, that is because I have been sleeping in and not getting there.

Today I met Brother Lionel SSF a brother from the first order of the Franciscans who has just returned to Sri Lanka from New Zealand. I had heard about me and was glad at long last to meet me.

With the bishop he is so much in favour in starting a third order TSSF of in Sri Lanka. With myself been in the third order he is keen for me to lead the way.

I mentioned to both the bishop and Brother Lionel that I am more than willing to help, it would be part of my duty, but also reminded them that my main responsibility lies at St, Thomas' College, Gurutalawa. And with St. Thomas' stuck in the middle of nowhere, then it would me more difficult for me to arrange and attend meetings for the TSSF, which is expected from me.

I agreed that I would support the project and take up the post of convenor

and Chaplain for the new formation, but with understanding mentioned that I could not always be relied upon for meetings due to my work at St. Thomas' and other diocesan work and committees that I am involved with. We had a meeting this afternoon and I agreed that I would set up the meetings each month for the coming year.

The pressure I think is getting to me and that is what is causing my illness, tiredness, heat and lack of English food.

I am tending to think also now that everything in Sri Lanka is crazy. Even the weighing scales. This morning I weighed myself, and since leaving England have lost nearly one and a half stone. OK, I know I have been ill and the sweat is always running off me, but that is a lot in 6 weeks.

Anyway I am going to retire from work for the day now and chill out for the evening, just need the time to get my head round things.

[Tuesday 23 December 2008.](#)

Again did not get to service this morning, just so tired, even now I got to the stage of when I do wake up I just do not want to get out of bed, not like me.

God as blessed me this morning, he has found me a proper English bakery near by. It is as he just put me on my feet walked me to this unknown place and said here, my brother all yours, enjoy.

This bakery/Café, is just English paradise. Someone knows what real food should be.

Chicken pies, Cornish pasties, and even egg, sausage and toast English breakfast eat in.

They however still do not know what bacon or black pudding is, and how to make real British sausages, the sausages here are just like the hotdog sausages you get from tins in brine. perhaps here is a market for anyone who wants to come out and make money, in making proper English meals. And again I still cannot understand why no one has made money here on cider. Cider is not heard of here.

I thought it would be more refreshing than lager. But there you are again a different culture, way of life and way of thinking.

I was told also that getting place to place even a short distance of 5 miles can take an hour, well I not surprised with the problems and set out of their road practice and crazy driving, they think its like driving on the dodgem cars at the funfair, how else better could I describe it, well OK, I could say it could be like a all day out for women drivers only, which would be fun

to watch.

So today, been guided by the hand of God to this beautiful English bakery and even better, next door is a British Bar. So had a couple of beers, to wash down what feels like all these cockroach's I have in my stomach.

Well it is now 23 December and to be honest just does not feel like Christmas at all, it is not like England with all the Christmas trees everywhere, York, where the city is alive with music, Christmas decorations, sat in front of the old log fire in a country pub with the Christmas feeling. I promise next year however short of money I suffer with, I will make sure I am home next Christmas, come what may.

Well just having my lunch while I write, a chicken pie from the English bakery. Not bad, but still they have no idea of how to make proper pastry, so the offer is open for any nice young lady who can cook to come out and feed me properly, to the satisfaction of proper food, but all spices and seasonal powders will be barred in the cooking, so ladies only if you can cook the plain English dishes you may apply.

Must have now at least 100 sermons I have written in the past on file in my book which have not been heard in Sri Lanka, so that is one thing I do not have to worry about so much, which is a weight of my mind, preparing sermons.

This morning my dear friend Sanda checked upon me unexpectedly, it was nice to see her and have a hug. But she could only stay a short while because of her work.

[Xmas Eve.](#)

Felt a little dizzy when eventually getting up this morning, but seemed to be able to get my friend to take me to the supermarket in his tut tut, just to get some essential things I would need for when I returned to St. Thomas' Gurutalawa.

After I returned at about 11am I saw Bishop Swithin Fernando sat in his porch so decided to go across and have a word with him before retiring to my own room.

Bishop Swithin Fernando which I have mentioned is a retired Bishop of Colombo. We seem to get on well with each other in conversation, but his speech is very poor and blur and you can not understand half of what he says. He is very keen about the Franciscans so he seems to get on with me well. He is also very happy because they have sent me to St. Thomas' College to be Chaplain, he comments that it is good to have a good old

English Anglo Catholic minister to get things back to how it should be. Well I have now just returned to my room, feeling very out of balance so I am going for a shower then for a rest for a while.

CHRISTMAS PERIOD

Since Christmas Eve after my shower at 130pm until Christmas Day 5pm very ill with severe chest pains and sickness, just stayed in bed, did not get to any of the Christmas Services, for example the Crib Service or Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas Morning Service. Saw no one throughout from Christmas Eve 130pm to 5pm Christmas Day.

Father James, one of the Seven Canons of the diocese who is retired and lives in one of the retired clergy houses, came round to see me and gave me some books on St. Francis to read, I kept a bright face and did not let on that I had not been well. I like Father James a lot, he was ordained by the Bishop of Durham (Bishop Harland) and served his curacies in the diocese of Durham before coming out to Sri Lanka to minister, he worked with Bishop Young (former Bishop of Ripon) at Kandy Theological College, and held other important posts and parishes before retiring. After he had left my pain continued even worse. Later in the evening about 7pm the bishop sent me Christmas dinner over, he had been trying to contact me but I had my mobile off. I had steak and Chicken Salad for my lunch which he prepared for me, it was noticed that I was in some pain, but now it had eased off a little.

Had a early night.

Friday 26th December 2008.

Had a terrible night with pain again and the heat would also not let me settle, dropped off to sleep now and again but woke up in pain. Just stayed in bed trying to rest this morning, I have taken extra of my medication I am on, hoping that it will ease the pain a little.

It is now very hot this morning but took a slow stroll up to one of the three main supermarkets in the area, the one next door to the English bakery which I mentioned, so after my long walk there could not resist having a English breakfast at the bakery, well not quite a English breakfast as we would put it, but the nearest you will find in Sri Lanka. I then went and got some stuff from the supermarket next door, fruit etc to take back with me. At the moment next door to me is a student from Kandy Theological

College. I had bumped into him earlier and he said he was glad to meet me, he had heard of me before he arrived from Kandy, my name is even going around Kandy because of my Franciscan connections, everyone here seems to have a great interest in the Franciscans.

This student is also the President of the College organisations and asked me if I would come to Kandy and do a lecture on Franciscan Theology, he would arrange a date. Kandy is not too far from St. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa.

In the evening I decided to have a walk across the Cathedral green and visit Fr. Laisk who is one of the Canons here, infact he is a very learned man with several doctrines and a writer of some amount of books on the Gospels, he is very Evangelical and does not even like wearing clerical vestments but only wears his cassockin services.

He is a very easy man to get on with and so friendly, and his wife is also very nice, so friendly. He gave me a couple of his books, and said I am welcome to visit anytime.

In Colombo there are 7 canons for the diocese which make up the Cathedral chapter which I have already mentioned, but the bishop seems to like to give the positions of the Canons to retired clergy for their past good work in the diocese. I now have met 4 of the present 7 canons.

Bishop Duleep is also very plain and simple in what he wears, during the day he just wears his white cassock and purple girdle around his waist and his Episcopal cross. For services he just wears his simple alb or surplice with no colours or decorations, just plain simple and he does not act in dignity. He refuses to use the bishops throne and just sits equally with the clergy.

[Saturday 27th December 2008.](#)

Must admit it really did not feel like Christmas for me this year, just hoping I can afford to spend next Christmas at home.

Again went to the supermarket to get some stuff I forgot last time, and a bottle of rum, for my coffee on a night time, so it should last me for some time if I only use it for that purpose.

At the moment it is just so hot and that humid sticky weather. The bottles of Spirits are so cheap here, even top names in Brandy, Rum, Vodka, Gin are only £2.50 - £3 a 750ml bottle, but the whisky is very expensive about £12 on average.

So you can buy all the spirits cheap except Whisky.

At the moment still in not top health so the bishop as still put me on rest by orders, to get well for St. Thomas' for next term. I am hoping to travel that slow boring hot and dangerous 6-7 hour journey on 2nd January. The kids do not start till the 6th January but staff return a week early for briefing and preparation.

I am not sure whether I have already mentioned it or not already, but Enid Blyton the famous authoress had connections at St. Thomas' College, Guratalawa in some way or another, I will have to find out in what way. She wrote her famous book 'The Naughtiest Girl in the School' novel and four follow ups to the book which were based on the St. Thomas' College, Guratalawa, basing the facts on the College set out and the life of the students here in her books. Even the early filming of the serious for TV was filmed here, and I have also been told other famous films and writings have been associated with the College, but what they are I am not sure, never gone into discussion about it. But I remember very distinctly reading Enid Blyton's novels of 'The Naughtiest Girl in the School' when I was at junior School, as they say some 'yonks' ago, meaning so long ago. The heat here slows things down so much, and makes you feel sleepy, Gurutalawa is so much cooler. It is a common thing that most people and rest for a few hours during the day because of the heat.

[Sunday 28th December 2008.](#)

Again a bad day for my health, missed mass in the morning and really just stayed quiet for the day. Later on I did take a few walks around the Cathedral grounds, and bumped into one or two people who I spoke to briefly. But on the whole the day was quiet, even struggled to write this part of the diary. I have been told that we will be travelling up to Gurutalawa on the 2nd of January, setting off early in the morning, I am in fact looking forward into getting back to the College, a new fresh start and a new year, also it is a lot cooler, and I do not seem to be attacked by the bugs and everything else there.

In the afternoon I took some time for rest and preparing for St. Thomas' otherwise on the whole it is a quiet day, not many people around because of the holidays. The Cathedral was less than half empty and the traffic and other activities seem to be in none existence.

This evening I was invited round to Fr Hugo's house with Fr Ashley. Father Hugo is the Priest retired from the Catholic Church and in his last years a Anglican Priest before retiring, the Priest I told you about earlier,

taking the morning service when he likes to sing out of tune, sway about and get carried away and lost with where he is during the services. His English is good, but tends to mumble a little. Last year he celebrated his 50th anniversary of his priesthood, 38 years in the Catholic Church and then 12 years in the Anglican Church after leaving the Catholic Church. His wife is also very nice and they told me that they have a 24 year old daughter, who I am told is very well educated and doing well, it took me a little time before it struck me, hmmm, but am I missing something here. I mean 24 years ago he was a Catholic Priest. I say no more.

Father Hugo is so funny down to earth and artistic, he spends most of his day composing and writing all these prayer books with Bible passages and pictures etc, they are very impressive. He is very musical and loves singing and playing the mouth organ.

Father Ashley is also very down to earth and has a really nice family a son who is married with children who visits him regularly, his wife is very lovely also but is ill with cancer, one minute she is clear of this dreaded illness, then they discover more cancer.

After the evening Father Hugo fell asleep so we left him on the couch and left quietly.

[Monday 29th December 2008.](#)

Had a bad night sleeping with the heat, it is so hot and sticky kind of atmosphere. Spent most of the day just clearing up things and getting work ready for the new term at St. Thomas' next year.

It was quiet in the Cathedral grounds, the diocesan staff are still on holiday, and the retired clergy are at the moment round at the bishops house having a party.

In the afternoon caught up with a few people I bumped into in the Cathedral grounds. My new white cassock is a bit long, seems to look more like a wedding dress with so much trailing on the ground I must have it shortened.

I go back to Gurutalawa on 2nd January so I will finish this volume of my diary on the 31st December and start my new volume on the 1st January 2009.

Life is still quiet over here, and I feel very tired also, but again I am itching so much with mosquito bites, however hard you try to rid them they just never seem to leave you alone. I am still having problems with chest pains now and again and headaches, but perhaps it is because I am not eating

very much, I never feel hungry with the heat and when I am hungry I just do not seem to want to eat, I drink loads of water, but you have to be careful how you drink here.

It was very hot during the day but the evening seems to have become a lot cooler.

Because of the heat and the lack of food I am losing weight at a good pace, and in Colombo especially the heat and sun is giving me a good tan and complexion, I seem to have lost all my wrinkles on my neck and under my eyes. My dry skin problems also seem to be cured.

Tuesday 30th December 2008.

A good night's sleep again, today a little cooler but still warm. The President of Sri Lanka was in government house today, next to the Cathedral, Both the government and police forces were out on full, I have never seen anything like it, they were just pulling all these metal bars across the road and holding up the traffic and searching everything that went past the Cathedral up toward Government House, they all had guns, and if they thought people were not corresponding in the way the forces wanted them to or the forces were suspicious, they held a gun at them while they searched them.

I am not bragging but I seem to be popular with the young ladies here and without exaggerating, I have been offered several dates, I have been tempted, but with work and past experiences I am keeping a low profile, not just that but most of them are from Colombo which is of no use to me as I mostly reside at Gurutalawa some 6 hour drive away from Colombo, even so some have even offered to come down and visit me, I can not see that going down well with College, especially with the position I am in and the surrounding with young pupils.

But I must admit that there is one of the government security guards who is crazy about me and she makes it well clear, and again I must admit she is very attractive and really nice, but she is only 24.

This morning I visited both Fr Hugo and Father James, I think Fr James is the only person who can make a decent cup of tea that taste like British tea.

When they make tea here it taste really sort of creamy dry taste and very sweet and is never hot just warm.

Fr. Hugo wants me to have dinner with him, his wife and daughter on New Year's Day, I have accepted.

Wednesday New Years Eve, and Thursday New Years Day.

New Years Eve got yet another new white cassock sent to me, it only cost £15 so I now have one black cassock, three white cassocks, two albs one with attachments for seasonal coloured hoods, the other plain, a set of seasonal coloured girdles and two white bands for round the cassock and scarf's etc. I always wear my black cassock under my alb for communion instead of my white cassock, I just wear my white cassocks for casual wear during the day when walking around.

Tried a strong traditional chicken curry from the local shop up the road, I was so ill with sickness afterwards and everything else I even missed the midnight mass for New Years Eve in the Cathedral.

Over here in all the Churches they have Midnight Mass for New Years Eve as well as Christmas Eve. Religion is very big over here in the Anglican Church and taken very seriously by everyone. The clergy are always respected and a gentle bow of the head is always given by a passer-by when they pass a clergyman in his white cassock even by people from other faiths.

The different faiths work well together here, they always acknowledge each of their different faiths. The Buddhist monks in their orange robes are even seen taking a walk around the Cathedral grounds talking to our clergy. One of their leaders is big friends with our bishop, and I am not sure which, but either the bishop's daughter or son is married to a Buddhist. The Catholics and Methodists even so they mix well do keep their distance a bit, not like in England where you get some Parishes which are ecumenical, like our Parish at Bishopthorpe. But they do mix here, but in different ways.

Like I have said not been able to do much or go far today, so there is not a lot to write about. Saw the bishop today (New Years Day) walking across the Cathedral grounds to the diocesan office to do some work in his office. On his way across the Cathedral grounds his path takes him past the East Window of the Cathedral where outside against the window is a big stone with a list of the past Bishops of Colombo and the graves of two of the past bishops, he always stops at this point and says a small prayer before continuing his walk to the office.

This morning I even missed New Years Day Service at the Cathedral still not well after the curry.

I will now finish at this point of the diary and start a fresh a new diary starting from the 2nd January, my arrival back at the College.