

## SOLIDARITY TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE –YAMBIO

Easter 2021

February 1, 2021, was a great day for Solidarity Teacher Training College as the first students arrived back after the hiatus of ten months due to the Covid shutdown in March 2020; a time of quiet and anxiety at the college. Seeing the Level 3 students returning in high spirits lifted all of us up and brought smiles to faces.

Before returning the students were required to sign a Letter of Undertaking Responsibility for Returning to School so that they were aware of what was expected of them in this time of Covid-19. The guidelines were spelt out clearly and students nominated persons to be contacted in case of any health problem.

Twenty students arrived on 1 and 2 of February to a new scene at the college. Tables and chairs were spread around the verandas so students could work socially distanced, but not totally isolated. Awareness of anxiety and depression were paramount in the minds of the tutors so everything was done to prevent problems as much as possible. Tutors had pastoral care groups and kept an eye on their students to ensure all was well.

The librarian arranged tables of books that were able to be loaned from the library so students could borrow books and read on their own.

Meaningful activities were arranged so students could be engaged but without too much pressure. At their tables they could sew, perhaps making a small bag by hand or some other useful item, produce an illustrated story book for children to read. Nature study was provided and a booklet on the college trees was produced. Many Maths pages were attempted and marked by the eager Maths tutor. Small diaries were produced and art books where students drew whatever spoke to them.

At the end of the fortnight the products were displayed in the library and all were delighted with the results.

One highlight of each day (from the Principal's point of view) was the fitness session. The PE tutor had the students really moving and during the hour there were screams of laughter and much banter, clapping and movement as they danced their way to fitness, wearing masks of course. It was impressive to see the young ones guided by the enthusiastic tutor demonstrating such a variety of activities. There is no reason for poor PE lessons in the primary schools!

Students took on the cleanliness of the compound with great energy. Teak leaves barely touched the ground before they were picked up and disposed of. Rubbish was collected twice weekly and all efforts made to keep the compound looking like a park. Hand washing stations were, and are, available in various areas within the premises.

On 15 February classes began in earnest. Everyone was ready for this "back to work" business.

Each student has their own desk in the classroom, set apart from the neighbour. Each student even has their own table in the dining area! What more could a person ask for?



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Classes are taught with all participants masked. This is the “new normal” as we hear it said from all around the world..

Fr Jim Greene, Executive Director, celebrated the Opening Mass for the semester on Ash Wednesday. How fortunate we were to have Fr Jim with us at that time to welcome back the staff and students to the study regime.

What a blessing it was to have Sr Jane Rose, from the Pastoral Team, with the students for a few days. She shared with them one afternoon: two and a half hours after she began, the timekeeper rang the bell and the class protested. They were all so taken by the sharing of Sr Jane that they wanted her to continue. While with us Sr Jane spoke with the staff and met a number of students for private sessions. This was truly a gifted time and we have asked Sr Jane to come again to work with the students.

Just after the arrival of the first group of students the Government locked down the country, hoping to stop the spread of Covid any further. This was initially for one month and that time was extended for another month. Now we wait until 5 April to see what happens next. The desire of all at the college is to have the remaining students return so as to continue their studies. We hope and pray.

Now as I leave South Sudan I wish to acknowledge and thank those I have had the privilege of working with during the past twelve and a half years: the many Solidarity members, the members of staff at the college, and the students from all over South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains. What a great blessing it has been to be with so many wonderful people. Together we have come far.

We are walking with Jesus to Calvary these days of Lent and Covid. May we be there to also celebrate Resurrection!

May God continue to bless all those associated with Solidarity with South Sudan!

Sr Margaret Scott