

# ST. XAVIER'S HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL UMOID

8<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Much has happened in Umoid since my last newsletter to you in September 2019.



For one, the academic year has almost come to an end and our students are presently busy answering their year-end Board exams.

During the course of these past few months, besides their studies our students also participated in a variety of activities outside the classroom. I will update you on a couple of them.

The work on our new building is progressing well and we should be able to move there in a couple of months. Our vice-principal was

ordained a priest. And the DC visited our school as did the District School Education Officer.

There has been so much going on, how I wish I could keep you updated more frequently about all these happenings in Umoid!

## The Trip to Nagaland

Fr. David, our vice-principal, got ordained a priest on December 30<sup>th</sup>. So we decided to have a strong representation at the event, even though we realized it would entail a tiring 14-hour bus ride over bad and dusty roads. We decided to make a 4-day school excursion of it, and invited some parents and friends of Fr. David to join the group. We hired two buses to take us all to Razeba, Fr. David's hometown, the place where he was getting ordained. And enroute, we decided we would stop at some places of interest in Kohima and Manipur.

Kids being kids, after we returned when the students were asked what they remembered most from the trip, they spoke of the delicious Naga food, the Naga singing and dances, and, of course, the large decorated bamboo pavilion where Dn. David became FATHER David.



After his ordination, Father David stayed on in his hometown for a few more days to celebrate a series of "first" Masses with his family and with various village communities, before returning to school in mid-January, in time for the beginning of the third trimester.

## The International Art Workshop

Ten of our students participated in an International Art Workshop which was held in Mawkyrwat. It exposed our students to some critically acclaimed works of art and they also received inputs from a team of international artists on the basics of various art forms.



## The DC's Visit

On Wednesday, November 13<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Ishwanda Laloo, IAS, the Deputy Commissioner of the South West Khasi Hills district, which is our district, visited our school. Wednesdays, as you would remember, are when our girl students come to school in their traditional dress – the jainsem.



*The Deputy Commissioner (in a pink jainsem) with the students and staff at school*

The DC said she came to our school “to see for herself,” all the wonderful things she had heard about the school. She explained how several people had inquired about the school and she felt the need to see the school for herself. Unknown to us, our school had inadvertently become the “talk of town” when we introduced the jainsem as part of the school uniform. Pictures of our girls in their jainsems had gone viral on social media.



The DC's visit was a delightful occasion for our students. Batkynti, the school leader, said, “You are young, smart and hardworking, and an inspiration for us all.” The DC then spoke to the students from her heart, advising them to work hard and to make the most of the opportunity they had to get a good education. She also encouraged them to cherish their traditional values, language, and culture.

Later, she visited the new building under construction and was informed about the future plans of the school. She said she was very impressed that the Jesuits had chosen a poor and underdeveloped part of the state to establish the college. “I laud the wonderful work you are doing. While most people want to establish schools in the towns and cities,” she said, “I want to thank you for choosing to come and serve this part of our state because it badly in need of good educational facilities.”

## The School Picnic

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, every year, the country celebrates Children's Day. It is the birth anniversary of Mr. Nehru, India's first prime-minister. Our students at St Xavier's, well, for the greater part, are technically not children. They are on the cusp of adulthood, beginning to fashion their own futures. But we decided to celebrate the day with a school picnic. The idea was to offer our students an opportunity for fun and, as importantly, a time to bond together as a class and to have an occasion to grow in leadership skills and exercise some responsibility.



It turned out to be a real fun day, both for the staff and the students. The skies were blue and there was excitement in the air. Cooking was an important part of what was done, from defeathering the chickens to frying potatoes. We also played games, swam in a local pond,

and climbed Mount Sawsymer, the mountain in whose shadow we had set up camp. Mt Sawsymer is well known among the Khasis because of a folk legend that explains why there are large boulders and rocks in the entire area.

On the following day at school, Fr. David did an evaluation of the picnic to ensure it was also a learning experience for the students. "We need to appreciate those who worked hard," he explained, "as well as those who organized things and ensured it was a fun day for all of us. But we also need to learn what we could do differently next time, and how we can do things better." At the end of the meeting, the students promptly asked about having a second picnic. But like all good things, the principal assured them, "that will have to wait!"



## Learning Banking



Our students were provided an opportunity to learn how banks function and the benefits of having a bank account and having savings to secure their future. An administrative team from the Meghalaya Rural Bank visited the school and conducted a morning session on the role and functions of banks. They also helped our students understand how digital banking platforms work and offered the students an opportunity to open their first bank account. Many took advantage of the opportunity.

## The New School Building

Work on the school building has been moving forward at an impressive pace. The shell is almost entirely complete and in two months, if all goes according to schedule, our school will move into the new facility. An important aspect of the new facility is the open area in the front and back of the building that will offer the students space to play games.



## **The New Academic Year**

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, we will start the new academic year with our first set of students in Class XII. In June, after the Matric results are declared, we will admit new students into Class XI. This year, in addition to Arts, we are also starting the Commerce stream. We are still quite uncertain about how the response of the local students and parents will translate into admissions. Will we have enough students next year? Will there be a rush and may we be forced to refuse admission to some? How will the students respond to the Commerce stream? Each of these questions will unavoidably have a ripple effect, impacting the school in multiple ways, determining how many new staff members we hire, how much more classroom furniture we order, what kind of classes we focus on given the strengths and deficiencies that our new students will come with. There are many uncertainties we must presently live with as we prepare for a new academic year.

But even in the face of these uncertainties, some things remain unchanging. We know we can always count on God for His constant care, and for the support of numerous friends and well-wishers, including you. Please know that we will continue to count on your prayers and support during the coming year and in the years ahead. May God bless you for accompanying us on this first year of our existence.

- *Paul Coelho SJ*

