

Happy New Year to my sponsoring churches! It's a new church year beginning with the season of Advent when we anticipate baby Jesus coming to us at Christmas, and Jesus' return to us. We are called to be prepared!

November was a month of preparation for me. I spent a long weekend in Bangalore with 20 or so other students in India who are taking distance learning classes towards a Master's degree in palliative care from Cardiff University in Wales. There were four tutors to launch us into the program which includes many projects and audits over the next couple of years.

Then I came back to continue my preparation for classes and lining up speakers and transportation and lodging for a training session at our Palliative Care Study Center at Sneha Deepam for a group of 16 Missionaries of Charity - Mother Teresa's order. As I wrote last month, the sisters are very capable of caring for the people that society rejects and that often requires a lot of hard physical work, but what happens to the Sister who has some physical limitations? How can they continue to contribute? This teaching session will offer these Sisters some additional counseling skills so they will then be better prepared to help with the psycho-social and spiritual needs of the people that they work with. The training sessions occupied the last two weeks of November and went very well. We had regular Bible studies, the Sisters either went off to observe in other departments such as Rehabilitation services and the psychiatry department or had speakers like a pediatrician who works with developmentally disabled children, a psychologist from the rehab department, one of our chaplains, and of course, me. At the end of each day, we had a time of reflection to talk about what had gone on during the day. At the end of the two weeks, the Sisters decorated my door with flowers and a thank you, as well as a touching thank you note. This was a sort of test training session, but the Sisters seemed to find it helpful and feel that they learned something. They are very eager students and have a lot of their own experiences to share.

Once the classes with the Sisters were over, I went back to work on my assignments for the Cardiff program. I worked on an assignment on Information Mastery and an audit of the effectiveness of the End of Life Nursing Education Consortium material in a training that we will be doing in Bihar for the nursing faculty in early December. I'd better get my assignments done on time because when you are learning online, you can't say that the dog ate your homework!

Your support and your prayers continue to keep me going, so don't stop now! And know that you are in my prayers too. Peace, John