

When I wrote to you last, I was just back in India after my yearly time in Liberia. I got back in time for mango season which was great because I love mangoes! I also got back in time for some good and welcome rain which settled the dust and took a little humidity out of the hot air. Along with the rain came the power cuts - that happens more with the rain and related storms.

I was back in India but still working on the Masters Program in Liberia. There were faculty questions to answer via email and forms to fill out and paperwork to take care of. But it is coming along well and I am very thankful for that. I also spent a lot of time trying to coordinate the satellite Internet service for Phebe Hospital in Liberia.

There are constant problems with it, and a technician has to come from Monrovia which becomes expensive. I think the problem is finally solved. I certainly hope so!

I also needed to meet with the doctors from Padhar Hospital who are going to Cameroon to fill in for their surgeon when he goes on home leave. They have been a little anxious about it and rightfully so! It is a very different experience for them. I spent four hours with them answering questions, showing them pictures, and generally clarifying things for them. I think some of their fears were quelled because they seem very excited about going.

On June 7th, I celebrated the 20th anniversary of my ordination. My sister sent me a photo taken that day and that brought back memories.

The Palliative Care Team had tea and coconut cookies for me in the afternoon and we discovered that our nurse, Shakila, had graduated from nursing school 20 years ago in June and Dr. Reena who is head of the team has been a doctor for 20 years! The folks at Sneha Deepam had a celebratory meal for me that evening, so it was a very good day.

I am working on a palliative care handbook for parish pastors - with the help of several of my colleagues - so that has been keeping me busy. It is meant to aid pastors who are ministering to dying parishioners by giving them a little more insight into the aim of palliative care and how they can work with the medical people to help the dying person attain comfort, both physical and spiritual.

In past letters to you, I have mentioned the weekly Anointing Service that we have. I usually do it with my fellow pastor Grace, but when she was on leave, I was on my own for the very hot but well attended service. People of all faiths come to the anointing - patients and family and friends of patients at Christian Medical Center - and we are all hot! After one service, I found the Chaplaincy Office locked, so I had to go home in my cassock. I was a bit of an attraction while I was waiting for the car to pick me up - even more so than usual!

The Medical Superintendent from Parkijuli asked me to come to Assam to help him decide on an X-ray machine and an ultrasound. We decided to meet in Guwahati, where I could get an air-conditioned room. I was a bit relieved because the guest room at the hospital often does not have electricity at night and the room doesn't have any windows - only doors!

The hotel turned out to be nice and I enjoyed the A/C and appreciated the WiFi. I also met with the doctors and staff from the Palliative Care program in town and the staff of the hospice there. They asked me for some feedback on their handling of some difficult cases they had treated and I enjoyed trying to give some insight and suggestions. On the way back to Vellore, I made a stop in Kolkata to meet with the Missionaries of Charity - Mother Teresa's order - about the counseling training we will be doing with about 15 of their sisters who are either older or physically unable to do regular duties.

Now I am getting ready for my trip to the US and my visits to many of you sponsoring churches. I look forward to meeting those whose prayers have helped me so much with my work. Keep those prayers coming - they are so important to me! Peace, John