

Christmas reflection

Irish tradition says that the Holy Family still travel throughout the world this night seeking shelter...

Is there room for them at your inn?

at my inn?

Can you see them pass by?

Joseph lost in thought...

Mary tired and heavy with child...

Can you see their eyes looking out at you from the eyes of

the homeless,

the poor,

the excluded,

the refugee,

the immigrant,

the elderly,

the child,

the lonely,

the victim of war,

the abused,

the hungry,

the persecuted,

the one you have already judged,

the one I have already judged...

If you would recognise them

then

slow down,

let your hands unclench,

simply breathe,

and

light

a candle

of welcome

in the

window

of your soul...

As the old poem put it...

"Often, often, often

goes the Christ

in the stranger's guise"



An Appeal

While in Ireland and elsewhere this past summer, Fr. Tommy and I met so many good and generous people. So many of those we met gave us a donation in support of our work helping young adults through SELL. All these donations of whatever amount are appreciated. Receiving such help is a great boost to us. The only challenge we have is that this support mostly will only come when we actually go home and meet people. This means that it is only during the times we are at home that we get this support. We may be given 40 or 50 euro/pounds by many of you. While such generosity is gratefully received we would be even more helped by a smaller donation each year (10, 20 euro/pounds or other of your choice) that we could rely on. So this APPEAL is to ask if any of you reading this newsletter would be willing to make a regular donation to support us. If you could do this we will have that much more security and can plan ahead with confidence.

Should you wish to do so can you please contact us directly by e-mail tommyhayden26@gmail.com leotraynor@yahoo.com or through the editor sellconnectireland@gmail.com (Kevin Vaughan +353830631817).

Sincerely with ongoing gratitude. Frs. Tommy and Leo.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT SELL

Account Details:

Name: Presentation Brothers Mission Account
Charity No: CHY3694
Sort Code: 93-41-78
Account No. 79467763
IBAN: IE93AIBK93417879467763
BIC: AIBKIE2D

Set up a Standing Order. Text Kevin Vaughan on +353 87 233 5756

If you would like to receive our newsletter by email (and save on our postage costs) please send your email address to sellconnectireland@gmail.com



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SELL CONNECT

Sharing Education and Learning for Life: A Peacebuilding Programme for Young Adults

A COMPONENT OF PRESENTATION BROTHERS' YOUTH MINISTRY

DECEMBER 2018

Fr. Leo's Christmas Greeting

Hello again as we close the year 2018 and we produce our 4th newsletter. Many of you know that I had time in Ireland this year, and what an amazing summer it was with so much sunshine. Not all of you know that I celebrated the 30th anniversary of my ordination in June. Now where did those years go!! Seems like yesterday that my home parish of Errigal Ciaran was all a buzz preparing to welcome visitors and celebrate. So very much has changed in that time.

Anniversaries are a time of reflection. I have spent just about all of those thirty years in West Africa. I arrived in 1988 into a mission scene that was very focused on the welfare needs of the people. We were building schools, clinics, sinking wells and expanding churches as the numbers in our parishes increased. Now in many places parishes are firmly established and the welfare needs have passed to government agencies, as it should, given that they have the responsibility to build up civil society and care for their own people. Sadly though in some places like South Sudan, where some of my brother priests are, there is still great need to respond to the welfare needs of the people due to war and instability.

Putting structures in place is a necessary work but building a community, helping people reach their full human potential this is also a critical work. Both needs should complement each

other. The building of structures and institutions is actually the easy part, the greater task is helping a community to live well together and help them truly do as Jesus asked 'to love one another'. We all need help to grow as persons, to become the best we can be. We need to learn how to get along with each

other to address prejudice bigotry, discrimination, intolerance and fear. We all need to find our voice and challenge unjust structures that destroy our earthly home and diminish the quality of life of many of our fellow human beings living here. Addressing these things and more requires the developing of a value centred spiritual life. This now is the main focus of missionary life and it's a focus not just for us here in Africa but for everyone everywhere. There is a lot to be done as we become a multi faith multi-cultural world. There is much to be done to counter the various forces working against the developing of a caring connected society and world. We live in challenging times. Here in Ghana, and in Nigeria, we are doing our best to reach the young with a life giving message through the SELL Programme. Jesus whose birth we celebrate this end of December is with us in our work we thank you for being with us also through your prayers and generous support.



Have a happy loving Christmas time - and strength for all that lies ahead.

Leo

SELL: A wonderful programme for the development of young adults.

The work of the SELL team in Ghana is made possible by a committed collaboration with the Presentation Brothers.

SELL (Sharing Education and Learning for Life), a programme that seeks to empower young adults to think critically about life issues and so make informed decisions about life choices, fits in very well with our charism of forming Christ in the young.

This programme was started in the Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese in the Upper East Region of Ghana by the Society of St. Patrick's in collaboration with us the Presentation Brothers. By the beginning of 2016, SELL was up and running: A resource team was formed and started working hand in hand with the Diocesan Youth Office, the Priests and Religious of the Diocese

as well as with the young adults. From these humble beginnings, the programme has now been extended to the five Dioceses in the Northern Ecclesiastical Province and beyond.

To ensure effective collaboration, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was reached and signed by the leadership of St. Patrick's and the Presentation Brothers in March, 2018. The Presentation Brothers have appointed a young brother to work with the SELL Team. It is our expectation that the involvement of this young brother would reflect the full representation and participation of the brothers in this excellent young adults' programme. It is our hope that the strength of this collaboration will ensure that the SELL programme will continue to expand its reach and continue to motivate peace-building.



SELL Ghana resource team



Facilitators from Kbandai Community in Tamale Crossing a river for Training



Frs Tommy and Leo Training



Fr Leo celebrates mass with volunteers in training

Life with SELL

Vincent Agyei, Team leader SELL programme Ghana

The SELL programme uses a peer empower scheme, call it a trainer of trainers' approach to respond to the needs of the young people in Northern Ghana.

In 2016, the SELL Resource Team Ghana, with the experience of the work in northern Nigeria, a similar terrain to northern part of Ghana where we are currently based, set out to engage young adults to ascertain their human development needs through our structured modules using focus group discussions. Based on the feedback and inputs from other stakeholder, the team reviewed the SELL training and working manual to respond to these needs. The team built on the working 'peer empowerment approach' from the SELL programme Nigeria to enable effective response to the identified needs. The approach trains volunteers on zonal basis, each zone is made of several communities and a team is selected from each community. The trained volunteers with the assistance of the Resource team and stakeholders from their communities organize workshops and focus groups discussions for young adults in their communities on each of the structured modules they are trained on (i.e. Peace building, Self -Awareness, community building, justice leadership and wisdom of traditions). Trained as a volunteer, working as part of the programme and rising to become the Team leader of the SELL programme in Ghana, I measure the success of the programme by the lasting impact it had on me and several other young people who have encountered the programme. The programme empowers one to 'open their eye', think and make informed choices and contribute effectively, their own quota to a world becoming more about one's individuals benefit than the general good of humanity.

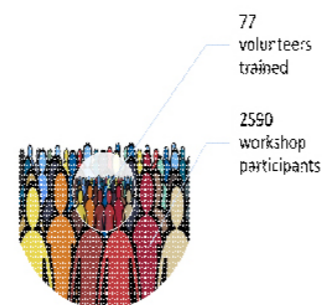
I am currently in Ireland, at the University of Limerick and studying Master of Arts in Peace and Development studies, a programme that is pivoted on understanding to dynamics of conflict resolution at the individual and multi-level and as well as various angles to bringing about development through processes that considers that needs of the people and promotes peace.

It is interesting how the how this programme ties in with the ideologies of SELL which is empowers people to 'be the change they want to see'.

I believe my studies here will build on the experience and empowerment I have already gained from being part of the Sharing Education and Learning for Life (SELL) movement to reach out to other young people who need our support.

'To empower a person to make informed choices and contribute to humanity, is a contribution to humankind'. That is what I believe, the SELL programme sets about doing.

SELL Ghana 2017-2018: Training Volunteers and Workshop Participation



Open your eyes



Fr. Thomas O'Connor, Saint Patrick's Society, Kiltegan

SELL celebrates another year of action on behalf of the poor and those on the margins of society. With every passing year its work becomes more vital and necessary. Empowering people to reflect critically on what is happening in the world around them is essential for the transformation of society into a more just and welcoming place for all its citizens.

The election of Donald Trump in November 2016 as the 45th President of the United States was a watershed for the world. One of the side effects of Trump's victory was the emboldening of other politicians with a similar disposition. Like Trump these politicians tap into a deeply felt anger and alienation in people and offer very simplistic solutions to what are very complex and deep-rooted problems.

Brazil has just elected a Trump-like, Putin-like and Duterte-like

figure as its next President. Jair Bolsonaro is infamous for his very right wing views on immigration, his disregard for social justice and for the environment. He has praised the military dictatorship which ruled Brazil with an iron fist from 1964 until 1985. He wants closer ties with Israel and the USA. He models himself on Donald Trump. He will deregulate the economy and will allow further deforestation in the Amazon Basin thus harming the environment in a manner which will be near impossible to reverse.

What is very sad and dispiriting is to hear people justifying their choice of Bolsonaro or Trump or Duterte. It is obvious that people who vote for these right-wing candidates are totally lacking in the ability to think critically.

For this reason the work of SELL becomes more and more vital in today's world which is fast falling prey to these dangerous demagogues who exploit the feelings of alienation and estrangement which many people feel today.

While these politicians do listen to people's feelings of alienation and estrangement – something commendable -the solutions they offer are catastrophic for the future of humanity and for planet earth. Their motivation for seeking power is invariably dubious; it is driven solely by their narcissistic tendencies and by their inordinate desire for praise and acclaim.

Never has the work of SELL been more necessary: Our sincere thanks to all the SELL Team and to all SELL Supporters for their dedication over the last year.

Despite all the obstacles much has been achieved. Let us OPEN OUR EYES to see what is going on around us. Let us make choices which will be for the good of our planet and of all who make their home on it.

SELL Nigeria

Fr. Patrick Esekon

The SELL programme has been active in Nigeria since 2003 (?) The organization has both young and experienced resource persons and a pool of volunteers across North-East and Plateau states of Nigeria who reach out to, and mobilize young people and other vulnerable groups to come together to reflect on issues that affect their lives, communities and the world at large through workshops and training. The Foundation also offers life choice programmes and leadership foundations for both in-school and out-of- school young people in their various communities. In our quest to continue to meet the needs of our target groups, and to also remain relevant in the formation of young people, the Foundation set out to build the capacity of more young persons and vulnerable groups in the year 2018 through trainings and other capacity building initiatives.

Entrepreneurship: Following the 2018 funding from Misen

Cara and St. Patrick's Missionary Society, the training of SELL facilitators on entrepreneurship started early in the year. This training was done in collaboration with Industrial Training Fund (ITF), 63 facilitators have been empowered with a loan support to enable them establish small-scale businesses of their choice. These small scale businesses have been jointly established as cooperative businesses in 5 communities.

Trauma Consciousness and Resilience: Following the trainings on Trauma Consciousness and Resilience, 27 trauma support groups have been established in 11 communities to support each other to overcome their individual trauma, and to form a strong support network to support other members of their communities struggling with the aftermath of trauma.

Advocacy, Lobbying and Gender Reconciliation: enabling the development of skills to effectively steer the necessary changes on gender and other social issues in their community.