



Fr Keith Hardless
Catholic Church, Meadow
Bank, Demerara, Guyana

Our Friends in Guyana

A MISSION SUPPORTED BY
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF SALTCOATS

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTER- EST:

- Fr Keith keeps in touch via email
- Christmas preparations reflected upon
- Hamper programme continues to go well
- Many families there helped by many families here

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Fr Keith prays for our union...

Greetings In the name of the Lord Jesus.

My thoughts and prayers have been with you during these days.

There must be so many mixed feels among the community during this time of union.

As the Pastor chosen to be in the midst of your flock this is a challenging time, dear Fr Jim. My prayers thoughts and love are with you and all the members of St Brendan's and St Mary's.

Our Community along the East Bank of the Demerara River here in South America has over the years been the beneficiaries of such great kindness and support from the Community of St Brendan's.

We stand now in solidarity with you and your community remembering always that God is a faithful God.

We pray that like a Good Shepherd he will lead you to restful waters, and that the new enlarged Community of St Mary's will embrace

the members of St Brendan's as their own, welcoming them to worship and praise the Lord and join in the great task of building up his kingdom in Saltcoats.

Please be assured that we are close to you at this time. May God continue to bless you

I am your brother in Jesus.

Fr Keith

A Christmas Tale Guyana Style

Dear Friends

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent. Our Christmas Novena is now in its sixth day. As I said to you a number of years ago this Portuguese practice of attending Mass at 5:30 am, each morning for the nine days before Christmas, is deeply rooted in our Guy-

anese Catholic Christmas tradition.

I must confess that getting up at 4:30am each morning is quite a Penance and requires a discipline. Me, trying to be disciplined!!

FEEDING THE STREET PEOPLE.

The following letter is from Fr Keith as he reflects on his parishes' preparation for Christmas time....enjoy

As I write this letter to you the second Sunday feeding of the street people by the St Vincent de Paul, is in full swing. For the last couple of hours the members and their friends have been packing the food and have set out into the streets. It is a real joy for me to see the spirit of these men coming



A typical market scene in Georgetown itself but many of Fr Keith's parishioners cannot afford the produce of their own land



Parish Diaries

Buying a simple thing like our parish diary gives a big boost to the Guyana Fund. We get them free thanks to the local advertisers which we hope you will support! Every £1 given for the diary is a £1 for Fr Keith!



The Christmas Day collection for Guyana



In this tough economic climate I know it is more difficult than ever to reach out to those most in need but I know that you will, even in these tough times, have a little for Fr Keith and his mission work in Guyana. Thank you in advance for all you can give to the Christmas Day collections.

IN MEMORIAM

The family of the late Mrs Agnes Dickie, who was a great supporter of Fr Keith and his work, thank all well-wishers who joined them to pray for her at her Requiem Mass, for their contributions to the memorial collection which raised £347. This has been sent to Fr Keith in loving memory of their dear wife, mother and grandmother.

May she rest in peace.

C If you could buy some raffle
a tickets for Peggy's
k Christmas Cake-
e on sale in the
 Church porch from
 28th November-then all
 the proceeds go to Fr
 Keith. It's a wee bit of a
 tradition now!

together and packing the food provided for their feeding project by our parish community.

Now in its *eight* year there is steady supply of families in the parish who volunteer to cook a pot of food. It truly is the poor caring for the poor.

I understand that today there are over two hundred boxes to share on the streets. There is no doubt that the experience of walking and sharing among the poor and forgotten has touched the hearts of the members of the S.V.P. There is always a full force to go out onto the streets of our city. A number of those preparing for Confirmation often join them.

CHRISTMAS GIFT LISTS & CHRISTMAS PARTIES,



The run-up to Christmas is in full swing all around us. Many Guyanese from other parts of the world are returning home

and will be doing so right up to the end of January.

Our airwaves and TV stations are filled

with every version of Jingle Bells and Santa Claus is coming to Town. It is a happy time for us as I am sure it is for you.

The children in the village keep reminding me not to forget their names on the Christmas gift list.

The Red Cross and Food for the Poor have reached out to us to fulfil some of the gift lists. We hope to give out about 400 gifts.

Various business firms have invited a section of the village children to their Christmas parties – and there is still more to come.



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The children of the parish present their Christmas pageant with a dramatization of the Christmas story. There are 10 Angels this time around. The Altar staff have warned the Angels that if they are using their altar gowns to dance around during the Pageant they better make

sure that they are back in the Sacristy for Midnight Mass – washed and cleaned!!

The story has been told so many times before and will be told again in our services this year. It has been our tradition in this community to allow the little ones to be the first to announce the Christmas message.

Drama is one of my strong areas of Ministry. We have lots of it. This year I will be in the benches. In the spirit of the future, the youth have

taken over the production. I can't wait for the sight of those tiny shepherds with the towels on their heads and the bed sheets wrapped around them, all tumbling their way towards the crib at Bethlehem. It touches even the coldest of hearts – it is the one scene I will make sure I don't miss.

What a joy to make room for Jesus in your hearts at a time when our Christmas story reminds us there was no room in the inn for the Holy Family.

THANKYOU FOR THE FOOD HAMPER PROJECT.

The Parish house is filled with food hampers. This year we will share about two hundred hampers. We are aware, that it is just a small token of good neighbourliness; but they are most welcome.

As we reach out and touch the lives of those around us we cannot forget you. None of this could have been done without your help. This year we have had to cut back a little but we move on.

What a joy to make room for Jesus in our hearts

Thank you again for all the love, support and time, that you put into helping in my work here in Guyana, you continue to be a special blessing to us from the Lord.

My love, prayers and many, many thanks to all of you. This is such a special time in the lives of all of us. I ask the Lord to bless you as I wish you all a very happy Christmas. Please remember to pray for us here in South America

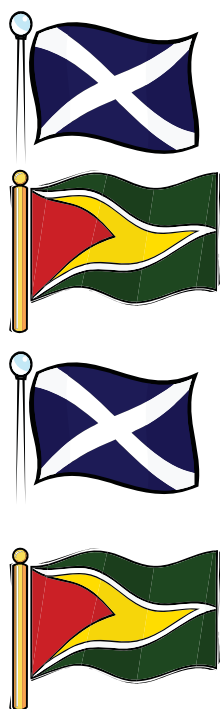
With love and good wishes.

Fr Keith.

The fundraising goes on!

Now that we are one parish under the care of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, we continue our pledge to collect for Fr Keith to help with the ongoing and mounting costs of the mission.

As well as all this, individuals send out their own donations as and when they can. Supporting and encouraging all the fundraising efforts is our own Maureen Moffat - thank you Maureen and thank you to all who support her wonderful efforts.



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A parish in the RC Diocese of
Galloway, Scotland. UK
Charity Number: SC 010576

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Full country name:

Co-operative Republic of Guyana

Area: 215,000 sq km (83,000 sq.miles)

Population: 751,223 (2002 census)

Capital city: Georgetown (pop 200,000)

People: 43.5% East Indian, 30.2% Black,
17% Mixed, 9.1% Amerindian

Language: English (though most Guyanese
speak a creole), also Hindi and Urdu

Currency: Guyana Dollar

Religion: 57% Christian, 33% Hindu, 9%
Muslim

Government: Democracy

President: Mr Bharrat Jagdeo

Molly builds a Church....

Molly McFarlane is a very talented lady and when Fr Keith heard about it he popped round to Molly's with a few friends, when he was visiting us, to have a wee look at a ceramic Church she had made and decorated (see picture). The Church was raffled off with wee lucky number boxes by Maureen and her band of merry helpers and helped to raise more funds for his mission work. Well done to Molly and the gang-and we're delighted that Molly herself is getting back on her feet after a wee bit of ill health.

God Bless the good work that is going

