

LOYOLA HOSTEL

CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION

The academic year started with three new Jesuit faces in the Directors' team: Fr Maria Joseph Mahalingam and Scholastics Babu Vincent and James joined the team while Fr Maria Augustine and Scholastics Arockiasamy and Maria Packiam were relieved to take up other responsibilities. The three Lay gems Mr Immanuel, Mr Edwin Christy and Mr Robert continued as Assistant Directors for the second year.

We are greatly indebted to Fr Augustine, who, as the Deputy Director, took bold initiatives for the overall formation of the students and for the welfare of the employees. We are grateful to the two young Jesuits Maria Packiam and Arockiasamy and wish them all the best.

ADMISSIONS 2006-07

The admissions for this year were efficiently done thanks to the active involvement of the Deputy Director Fr Maria Joseph, the office staff headed by Mr Manimaran, and for the sportsmen, with the enthusiastic participation of the Physical Director Mr Vijayakumar.

During this academic year, 270 First year UG and 126 First year PG students have been admitted. In keeping with the preferential option for the poor and the Dalits particularly from the neighbouring districts, well over 40% seats have been given to the Dalits, while earnest attempts have been made to accommodate all the deserving students, indeed from different States of India. Right now the hostel is full with a highest ever strength of 952 inmates, representing the variegated nature of the country, making our hostel a microcosmic India.

CONCERN FOR THE POOR

Even as the composition and the contours of the Hostel in the recent years have been undergoing tremendous mutations inextricably bound up with the Jesuit option, the Management has been taking comparable – even extraordinary – steps to provide an appropriate campus culture, where a poor, rural, first generation student would feel accepted, respected and helped. Concretely, for example, the Management has instituted a corpus fund to the tune of Rs 70 lakhs exclusively for the purpose of providing fee concessions to as many as 300 inmates. We thank Fr Rector, the Procurator and the Jesuit Community for this gesture, yet another manifestation of the Jesuit commitment.

Much in the same spirit, attempt has been made to trim the menu in order to bring the per-diem down. While this attempt initially met with a mixed response - even a bit of resistance - most of the students, and parents as well, have understood the spirit behind.

Considering the fact that quite a few students are in need of or would like to go for part-time jobs, a unique attempt has been made to create job opportunities within the hostel by opening a variety of shops - IT shop with two telephones and a copier, Laundry with two washing machines, Coffee shop, and Shop H2O. All these shops are entirely managed by the students themselves, thus providing them an additional opportunity to cultivate their entrepreneurial skills.

ACADEMICS

Drawing insights from last year's experience, significant changes have been introduced this year with the view to provide a more conducive academic atmosphere: the hostel blocks have been reorganised to accommodate UG Juniors, UG Seniors, PG, Self Supporting and Sportsmen in separate Sectors, each entrusted to the care and guidance of an Assistant Director. An innovative venture this year is the introduction of Academic Consultants, assigned to each floor in the Juniors Sector and each Block in other Sectors. We thank the research scholars and the teachers who have volunteered to be available to the students as the Academic Consultants.

Like the previous year, this academic year also began with a mandatory orientation to all the hostellers during which the students were motivated to make their hostel arrear-free, eco-friendly, and English-speaking. Academic Self-Monitoring Card and Arrear Clearing Plan have been introduced to help the students monitor their own academic progress.

Once-a-semester General Orientation in the beginning, Year-wise Meeting and Dine-together after the first internal tests, and Exam Orientation towards the end have come to stay as healthy practices. Senior Jesuits, faculty members from various disciplines and college officials were invited to address the students during these meetings. We whole-heartedly thank them all.

INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES

The Management is keen to provide maximum feasible facilities to enable students feel comfortable and concentrate in their studies. Whatever grievances the students aired during the year-wise meetings and other forums including Orkut, have been promptly and proactively responded to by the Director and the Management. Practically all the rooms have been furnished with wooden cots. Water is made available throughout the day - probably the only hostel in Chennai city where water is in such an abundance. Two additional part-time sanitary workers and an additional electrician have been employed. An expert Dietician was invited to study the mess, and based on his suggestions and in consultation with the Delegates a few changes have already been introduced, while others are in the pipeline. To tackle the menace of frequent electricity failures, the Management has allotted Rs 20 lakhs in the budget for the forthcoming year to install generators. We thank the efforts of the Rector and the Principal to light up the hostel with uninterrupted power supply.

While such efforts are on on the part of the Management, students do transcend comforts and conveniences, if the situation so demands. On quite a few occasions the students have marvelously displayed their adjustability and social sensitivity.

STUDENT FORUMS AND CLUBS

Hostel Council

Students get involved in running the hostel by initiating and executing multifarious activities throughout the year through the following Forums / Clubs: Prayer and Worship Forum, Nutrition Forum [vegetarian and non-vegetarian messes], Green Club, Knowledge Forum, Cultural Forum, and Sports Club. Year-wise elections are held in the beginning of the academic year to elect the Delegates for these Bodies. The elected Delegates, together with the Assistant Directors, constitute the Council of Delegates. The Council meets once a month to evaluate the previous month and plan for the next month.

The Delegates' Council this year has got a separate office furnished with a computer and printer for the official use of the Delegates. We thank Fr Director for making this facility available to us.

Prayer and Worship Forum

Besides daily / weekly masses and the Tuesday Litanies, which many tend to attend regularly, monthly mass is celebrated within the hostel for the benefit of the Catholic students, usually coinciding with special occasions. The choir has been multilingual and elevating, and it has won the appreciation of all the Fathers who have celebrated Mass with us.

A new venture this year is the periodic Inter-religious Prayer Services common to all the students practising different faiths. We are thankful to Frs Rector, Principal, Peter Xavier, John Pragasam, S Arockiasamy and Rex Angelo for their involvement in and concern for the spiritual well-being of the hostellers. We thank all the Fathers in the Jesuit Community for their inspiration.

Green Club

The formal inauguration of the club for this year was held on 3rd July 2006 with Rev. Fr. Ignacimuthu, Director, Entomology Research Institute, planting two banana saplings in front of Sauliere hall. In his informative and inspiring speech he emphasised the need for ecological awareness and conservation of biodiversity. The function was lively, with a street play by the skit team of the AICUF, and an awareness song by our own delegate.

It was a suggestion of this Club that prompted the revival of the vegetable garden near the N.V. mess. Thanks to the Director, a person with an exemplary love and respect for life, be it human or plant, and the enthusiasm and hard work of the hostel workers, particularly the mess workers, what was earlier a garbage dungeon has now been turned into a banana grove, appropriately named after Rev Fr Rapinat, a great

Jesuit botanist. While the banana trees are just ready to yield fruits, we have already reaped a harvest of 35 kilos of tomatoes and 15 kilos of brinjals.

The Club has provided an opportunity for 5 deserving students, chosen by the Director himself, to earn a supplementary income by working part-time in the various gardens scattered across the hostel premises.

The most recent activity of the Club was the acquisition of exotic plants from the Forest Department and planting them in specific gardens.

The Green Club has been able to achieve so much, thanks to the combined works of the mess manager Mr Antony and supervisor Mr Paulraj, the tireless mess workers and the block attenders, and of course some interested students. We thank them all.

Knowledge Forum

The formal inauguration of the club for this year was held on 26th July 2006 with Mr. 'Nakkeeran' Gopal, Editor of Nakkeeran, as the Chief-Guest.

Interaction with professionals from various walks of life has been regularly organized by the Forum on Thursday nights. Topics covered so far encompass a wide spectrum catering to the needs and aspirations of arts, science and commerce students. Issues, very sensitive and controversial, have been deftly and expertly handled by the resource persons. No wonder, then, why all the sessions were well attended, though attendance was entirely voluntary.

The list of topics includes, a thought-provoking "Where does India go?" by Mr. Duraipandian, a much-debated "Men, Women, and Feminism" by Prof Dr Mangai, an extremely sensitive "Reservation Policy - A Critique" by the noted Dalit leader Mr P. Chandra Bose, an enthralling "Opportunities in Science Fields" by Dr. Samuel [General Manager of Orchid Chemical Ltd.], an awe-inspiring "Waste Management and Environment" by Dr. Sultan Ahmed Ismail, a challenging "Women's Day - An Historical, Cultural Perspective" by writer Dr Padmavathy Vivekanandan and a timely "Chikun-gunya - The Causes and the Remedies" by our own student Mr Shreth Chongtham.

The Forum has opened the doors to the inmates of the hostel who are book-lovers. Called 'Bibliophile', the periodic book review sessions are entirely by and for the students: students review books of their choice and respond to queries from the floor. The 'Bibliophile' sessions are usually well attended, the lowest participation so far being 75. The Director, being an author himself, is one of the regular participants in these sessions.

Besides the Thursday meets, the Forum has conducted a quiz competition, and organised a Film Festival where it screened the world's best Foreign language movies such as Chinese, Iranian, French and German, and also the best movies in Indian languages such as Thamizh, Kannada, Telegu, Malayalam and Hindi.

All these were possible only because of the motivation given by our Director, the valuable efforts put in by the delegates of the Forum and the continued and ever-growing interest shown by the students. We thank all the students for their support and active involvement, and all the resource persons for sharing their knowledge with us.

Culturals Forum

The Forum had a spectacular inauguration with a tête-à-tête session with the famous cine actor cum director Mr K. Bhagyaraj. In his characteristic style the actor cum director spoke on the impact of cinema on culture, particularly on the youth culture. The function was spiced up with a performance creatively mixing western and folk arts.

Following the inauguration, the Forum organised the Freshers' Day programme and a singing competition in which a good number of hostellers participated and exhibited their talents.

During the semester break [November and December] the Forum organized a month-long non-stop cultural extravaganza, including International and Indian Languages Film Festivals exposing the students to world-renowned classics and alternative cinema. The highlight of the festivals is a lively and friendly interaction with Mr Jananathan the director of the latest super-hit *Ee* starring Jeeva.

Besides the much popular Cultural Week which consisted of various competitions in Thamizh, the 'English Rendezvous' with the objective to celebrate English and to demythologize the myth that it is hard for a non-English medium student to converse in English was held for a whole week. The events of the routine 'culturals' were performed in English with such proficiency and confidence that the 'Rendezvous' enthralled the audience beyond expectations.

An imaginative event during this year's culturals is the 'I-Pack' - 'packing' one's self - with an emphasis on presenting the total personality making the body, dress and all other paraphernalia gel together.

Weekly screening of feature films have been regularly held. Students eagerly look forward to Saturdays when we have the screenings, mostly held in the open air. To help students familiarize with spoken English, we have strictly adhered to the policy of using English as the lingua franca in recreation and entertainment.

The climax of the Forum activities came in the form of a musical treat by Edwin Murmu, a member of this Forum, and his band. Fr David, Murmu's mentor in school, was the Chief-Guest.

We thank all the professors, who helped us with their valuable feedback to our performance during the culturals - both Thamizh and English.

Nutrition Forum

The Forum commenced its activities with the informative and challenging talk on the issue of hunger and poverty in India by Prof. Victor Louis Anthuvan of LIBA.

On 24th of every month the Forum has held its official meeting with the Director, the mess manager, and others directly linked to the mess to study the mess bill, compare prices, and make appropriate changes in the menu.

The Forum has arranged year-wise 'Dine-Togethers' once a semester in order to help students come closer and grow in friendship. These dinners, arranged in the cricket ground, were also occasions to informally exhibit talents, share a laughter or two, listen to the experiences of specially invited guests, and relish the twin delicacies of food and friendship. No wonder these dinners were whole-heartedly appreciated by the students.

The Forum organized an orientation programme for the mess workers by Dr V. Gurumoorthy, Professor of Medicine and expert Dietician at Sri Ramachandra Medical College. The Doctor ate twice in the hostel mess to evaluate the nutritional content and the overall hygiene, and came up with valuable suggestions for the benefit of the students and the workers.

Lending a helping hand to the Culturals Forum, the Nutrition Forum organized the English Rendezvous. The inauguration of the rendezvous was graced by Professor Ranganathan, Project Director of United Nations Youth Organization and Peace Ambassador of World Peace Forum, UN.

The hostel has continued for the third year to serve noon meal to the college students. We appreciate the mess workers for the extra labour put in, and thank the Dean of Students Dr Sagayaraj for his constant support and encouragement.

The out-door catering with a professional star-hotel look has brought in a considerable income - an income that has greatly helped in maintaining the per-diem at the lowest possible level among the city colleges. While governments could be toppled as in Punjab and Uttarkhand owing to price rise, the mess workers here have been putting in extra labour to offset the impact of inflation on our per-diem. We thank Fr Director for taking concerned, concerted and determined steps to make the mess affordable.

While acknowledging the fact that it is difficult to satisfy everyone, we would like to reiterate that we have made every attempt to provide maximum satisfaction to maximum number of students.

Sports Club

The Sports Club had a gala beginning with a basketball match between the Directors Team and the Students Team, announced metaphorically as 'Gladiators vs. Terminators'. The Terminators - the students - won! The Chief-Guest for the programme Mr R Natarajan, Gold medalist, South Asian Games, spoke on the importance of sports.

Many of the events of the prestigious Bertram Tournament witnessed the involvement of the hostellers as contestants. Though we did not make it to the finals in anyone, it was the joy of participating that mattered to us.

The month of December was marked by a series of indoor and outdoor games which culminated in the Sports Night. Fun games such as arm-wrestling, brick-holding, push-ups, body-building, and sack-fight entertained both the participants and the spectators. All the winners of all the sports and games events were awarded certificates.

In view of the forthcoming Workers Day, the Forum has just finished conducting sports for the workers. The workers formed themselves into different teams and enthusiastically participated in volleyball, tug of war, sack race, running race, and slow cycling race.

We thank the Physical Director, his assistants and the markers for all the support we have received throughout this year.

Workers Welfare

Thanks to the efforts of Fr Rector, the Treasurer and the Secretary, a new pay scale on par with the college staff was evolved for all the hostel workers [both management and mess] and the same has been implemented from the start of this academic year. Now the mess workers enjoy the benefit of PF and pension.

Weekly video screenings and periodic masses are arranged as usual. The Deputy Director has taken a special interest in the welfare of the workers, and attends to their personal and spiritual needs.

Fr Director has set apart Rs 5 lakhs as a corpus fund [Hostel Employees' Children Study Aid Fund], the interest accruing from which is to be used for the studies of the hostel workers' children.

Workers' Day has been celebrated for the last three years in order to honour the workers and to express our gratitude to them for their services to us, sometimes even foregoing their right to rest. [The Workers Day this year was celebrated on 17th March.]

The Future

Throughout the year there is demand for hostel accommodation. Some really deserving students could not be accommodated for want of space, while it may be true at the same time some well-to-do students have found a place in the hostel. There is obviously a need to expand the hostel comparable to the annual college intake. The Management has taken a serious note of this. Plans to construct a separate UG hostel are in the offing.

The Management has already approved the proposal to modernize the kitchen and the work is to begin the day after tomorrow [Monday]. This project would cost the Management Rs. 40 lakhs. We are grateful to Fr Rector for his extraordinary concern for the hostel.

Thanks

I take this opportunity to thank Fr Rector, a visionary with the passion to love the poor, and the zeal to serve them; Fr Principal, an all-loving and unassuming leader of calibre; Fr Secretary, a relentless worker committed to the marginalised; Fr Treasurer, a person endowed with wit and generosity; Fr Alphonse Manickam, a contemporary Jesuit historian of erudition; all the Fathers and Brothers – the Hostel is indebted to you for your presence and support.

I would like to place on record the well-coordinated team-work of the Deputy Director, the Assistant Directors, the Delegates, and the management and mess workers.

The hostel is grateful to all the professors, the officials of the college, the markers and other coworkers for their services throughout this year.

My sincere thanks are due to all the parents, the well-wishers and friends, and in a special way Mrs Vandana Zacshariah and Mr George Zacshariah, an illustrious alumnus of the hostel, for gracing this occasion.

As I end this annual report, I wish all the outgoing students all the very best in their future endeavours.

Thank you.