

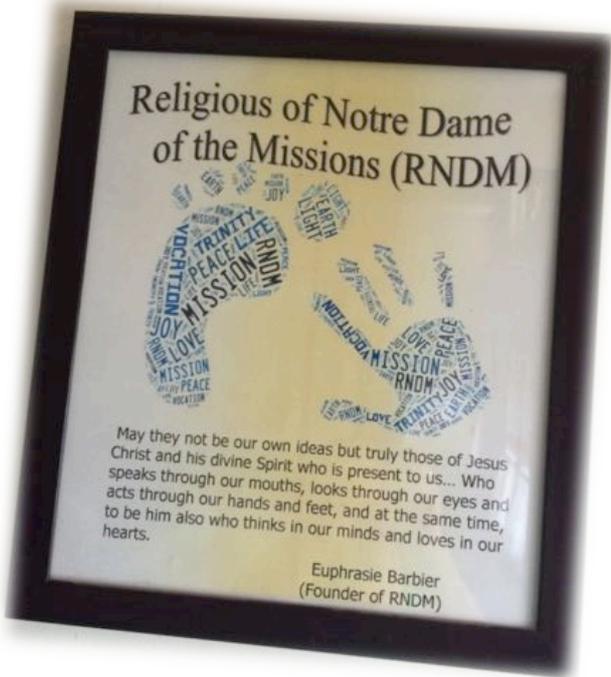


# **Sabbatical Report**

**Steve Bryan**

**Sacred Heart College**

**Napier, New Zealand**



## REPORT ON SABBATICAL TO INDIA

<b>PROVINCE</b>	South India
<b>CONTACT PERSONS</b>	Sr Suma, Province Leader and Sr Cecilia, Province Mission Coordinator
<b>VOLUNTEER</b>	Stephen Bryan, Principal, Sacred Heart College, Napier, New Zealand
<b>DURATION</b>	July 13-August 6, 2015



### ITINERARY

- 13 July: arrival at Mariam Nilaya Convent, Bangalore
- 15 July: car to Preshitha Matha School, Kollam, Kerala
- 26 July: train to Maria Bhavan School, Amalapuram, Kerala
- 30 July: overnight train to Mariam Nilaya Convent, Bangalore
- 1 August: overnight bus to Euphrase Nilaya Mission Bidar, and car to Nirmalalaya Convent and School, Almel
- 3 August: car and overnight train to Mariam Nilaya School and Convent, Bangalore
- 6 August: visit to Mariam Nivas School and Convent, Bangalore
- 6 August: departure from Bangalore

### SABBATICAL PROPOSAL

I made contact initially with Sr Jyothi who I had met at the Educational Symposium in Perth in 2013. She encouraged me to visit India to explore 'first hand' what mission really meant. In 2014 when I was considering the options for a Principals' Sabbatical I emailed her and asked whether it might be possible for me to visit India and make some sort of contribution in RNDM schools. A little while later I received an email from Sr Suma confirming that a visit was possible and that they were prepared to accept a volunteer according to the RNDM guidelines. Subsequently the logistics for my trip were put in motion.

I submitted my Sabbatical proposal to the Ministry of Education and this was approved towards the end of 2014. Over the next six months I emailed and skyped Sr Suma regularly in preparation for my trip to India. I received documentation from Sr Suma and Sr Cecilia which highlighted 'Guidelines for RNDM Volunteers' and which included the following *specific tasks*:

- To conduct training programmes for the teachers of Preshitha Matha School – Kollam (Kerala), Nirmalalaya School – Almel (Karnataka) and Maria Bhavan School – Amalapuram (Kerala).
- To organise seminar and coaching classes for High School students at Preshitha Matha on time management, effective leadership, and communicative skills.

All necessary travel arrangements and documentation were organised and I departed from New Zealand on Sunday 12 July 2015 for India.

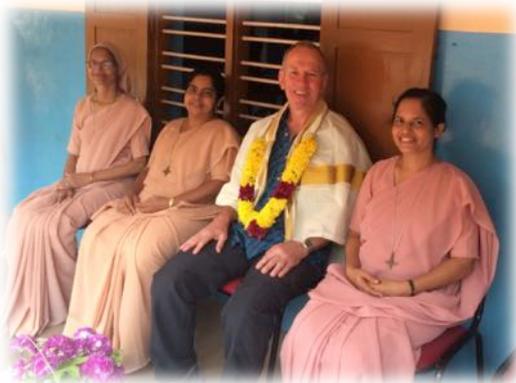
**REPORT:**

*Accommodation and Hospitality:* From the time of my arrival at Bangalore Airport in the very early hours of the morning on July 13 to my departure at Bangalore railway station on the evening of August 6 I was treated with absolute love and kindness. I felt relaxed and comfortable for the entire duration and I am sure this was a notable reason why I remained healthy and well for every minute of my stay. I am deeply grateful for the hospitality I received and the spirit in which it was conveyed. I loved the atmosphere and lifestyle of the RNDMs and felt totally happy and fulfilled for all my time.



*Travel and Duration:* I was booked on to sleeper trains and buses and accompanied by the Sisters on all my journeys, apart from one when I was accompanied to and picked up from the train station by the Sisters. I felt comfortable and safe on all my journeys. On shorter local journeys I was always accompanied by Sisters in cars or auto-rickshaws. It was some time before I got the sense that they felt more comfortable about me leaving the community compound unaccompanied. I appreciated this genuine sense of care and concern for my well-being and I always ensured to let them know where I was going and when I returned.

The duration of my stays in the different communities varied from 11 nights to 1 night (see Itinerary above). I loved all communities and schools I visited. I was welcomed with passion and pride through cultural performances and presentations. I reciprocated with traditional Māori greetings which I think were much appreciated.





It was extremely interesting learning about Indian culture and traditions and the RNDM ways of life. I learnt that Indian society is incredibly diverse from the North Eastern States to those in the very south, all with their own language and unique traditions. Listening and talking with the Sisters at meal times were fascinating revelations and insights into the history, politics, culture, religious, and social dynamics of Indian society, so diverse but yet all unified as Indians (an insight that I heard on numerous occasions).

Retrospectively spending more time in Almel with the Sisters at Nirmalalaya Convent and School would have been rewarding. It is quite significant that the place I spent the least amount of time at is the one I believe our students at Sacred Heart in Napier can most benefit through providing funds for the girls who live in the hostel there.

*Specific Tasks:* While I was aware of these it was difficult planning in advance, that is before I left New Zealand, simply because I did not have any knowledge or understanding of teaching and learning pedagogy or practices in India. I took resources with me and had ideas but it was not until I arrived and observed teachers and students in their schools that I was able to formulate ways to meet the specific tasks. I developed a teacher seminar ([appendix 1](#)) and student unit ([appendix 2](#)) which I delivered to three groups of teachers at two schools and to a number of Class 9 and 10 students (Years 9 and 10). These sessions and classes I enjoyed and the verbal feedback I received from teachers and students was very positive about how enjoyable and beneficial they had been. It was difficult to quantify any of these benefits though because of the lack of follow-up in the short time I had among them.



*RNDM Life:* From the start of the day when I shared Mass or prayers with the Sisters to the final meal and conversation in the evening I loved every minute of every day with the Sisters. Being a part of their communities was an absolute privilege and pleasure. Their beautiful sense of spiritual community founded on the charism of Euphrasie Barbier has been entrenched into my being. A 'hearty' welcome is personified through the generosity and warmth of the Sisters to visitors and I felt much loved and cared for throughout my stay. Prayer in the mornings and evenings was reflective and sustaining and I felt like I experienced a spiritual retreat during my month-long stay with the RNDMs. Celebrating Mass in English, Malayalam and in the Syrian (Antiochian) rite were all deeply spiritual encounters for me. Meal times were wonderful occasions of the community gathering for food and engaging in story-telling, anecdotes, personal and community reflections, laughter and happiness.

I was never allowed near the kitchen to help out and it became a goal of mine to clear my dishes from the table, let alone others as well! During the day I loved catching up with Sisters as they went about their daily tasks and roles, and talking with them about their lives and those of their communities across India. I learnt so much about Indian life, of the diversity of Indian culture, of the RNDM formational journey from aspirants to final vows, of their work and challenges as teachers, nurses, administrators, in mission and refuge centres, and travels both within India and internationally. I gained an insight into what it must be like to work and 'mission' in a country where the huge majority of people are of different religious beliefs and the Government, dominated by this religion, are constantly suspicious and non-supportive of the 'mission' vocation. The overwhelming sensation of my RNDM experience was of the resilience and compassion of women dedicated and devoted through prayer and good works to the disadvantaged and deprived of Indian society.



*Outcomes and next steps:* My experiences can be summarised under two aspects. Firstly the schools I visited and the teaching and learning that I observed and engaged in across those 4 RNDM schools. The students were adorable; friendly, respectful, inquisitive, and loving. I was overwhelmed by their friendliness and desire to know about me as a person and where I came from.





The teachers were hard working and committed. Working with them was challenging as they lacked confidence in sharing ideas in an open forum but their interest and engagement in my activities was genuine. I found the teaching very teacher centred. Teachers imparted information and hence learning through the use of the blackboard and in order for students to learn the languages expected of the curriculums, 'rote' or repetitive aural-oral exercises were most common. There was little one to one, teacher to student interaction or students working in pairs or groups. Teacher direction from the front of the classroom, and student response through either oral rote response or written response were the dominant teaching and learning styles.

My observations here are by no means critical and I believe in many ways suit the demands of teaching and learning in Indian schools. These practices all work where class sizes frequently surpass 50 or even 60 children and where the multi-language nature of Indian society requires multi language proficiency. In fact I well remember my own learning as a young student being of exactly the same nature. As a means of contributing to the teaching and learning in these RNDM schools I would love to return with a small group of senior students and for them to support the teaching and learning through classroom engagement and tuition with the students. The mutual benefits of growth and understanding would be amazing for both Indian and Kiwi young people. I spoke with Sr Cecilia about this idea and she was all for it. We discussed the logistics of when and how it would work which I look forward to pursuing and sharing with Sr Cecilia.

Secondly my visit to Euphrasie Nilaya Mission near Bidar, and Nirmalalaya Convent and School in Almel heightened my understanding and appreciation of 'mission'. I guess at one time Sacred Heart in Napier was a mission field, albeit over 100 years ago now, but the families and children of these places are truly in need of the love and opportunity for a better life that the RNDMs have come to offer. The rural conditions were severe and the Sisters live and work in hostile surroundings. Their explanations to me of cultural and traditional practices which compromise the birth of a girl because of abortion, to child brides and child labour underlined the huge social forces that they contend with in order to make a difference for young women and girls. I am in awe of their dedication and selflessness to their vocation.





Meeting the young girls in the hostel in Almel was the realisation of the Sisters truly making a difference for these girls. Hearing that parents will come to the hostel seeking the return of their daughters but the Sisters standing staunch denying this request because they believe in the rights of the girls to an education and a faith journey which will one day lead them to independence and self-determination was truly inspirational. Since my return I have shared some of this with my students through school assemblies.



I have sought the names and photographs of the hostel girls from Sr Dominica and intend to set up an 'adoption' programme where each of the Form Classes at Sacred Heart adopt a hostel girl and raise the funds required to meet her hostel costs. I discussed this with Sr Dominica while there and she described the typical costs for a hostel girl per year. It would certainly be an

achievable goal for a class of New Zealand students. At the assembly mentioned the girls presented me with over \$1600 for RNDM causes, raised while I was in India. While raising funds is great, making a connection with their Indian sisters would complement this special relationship. I also discussed this idea with Sr Cecilia.

The Special Character theme at Sacred Heart College Napier this year is '*Love by Loving*'. The intent has been for love to not merely be a passive thing but rather an active expression of one's self. Numerous causes have been identified throughout the year which the students have taken to heart and actively supported through their own time or resources. I believe young people get the idea and application of '*Love by Loving*' and so my hope, through prayer and information, is that the young women of Sacred Heart Napier will support the growth and development of the young women of India.

*Acknowledgements:* My 35-day experience in India has changed my life. I now want to return to India and would love nothing more than a protracted period of time working in the schools of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. To these truly wonderful and amazing women I say thank you.

My prayers will always be with these Sisters and for the vocation they have been called to as Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.

**Steve Bryan**  
**September 2015**







**Appendix 1:  
MARIA BHAVAN SCHOOL**

Teaching and Learning

Today we will evaluate, reflect, and share ideas and evidence about your role as a teacher:

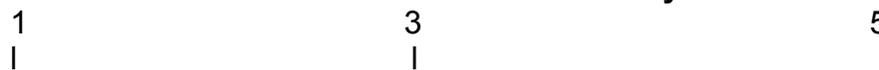
- Self-perception of your role
- Student relationships
- Students' learning
- Strategies for teaching and learning
- Review of teaching and learning

Set some goals for your role as a teacher:

- Self- perception of your role

**STARTER:** HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER?  
(your performance and impact on the students)

**Place an X on the continuum to show how you rate**



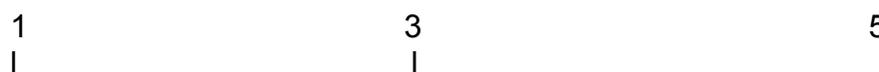
1 = low    3 = reasonable    5 = high

**DISCUSSION:** WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE ABOUT YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER?

- Student relationships

**STARTER:** HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR STUDENTS?

**Place an X on the continuum to show how you rate**



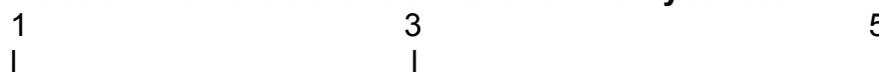
1 = I don't know them very well    3 = I know them reasonably well    5 = I know them really well

**DISCUSSION:** HOW DO YOU GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS?

- Students' learning

**STARTER:** HOW MUCH DO THE STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT THEIR LEARNING BEFORE THEY START?

**Place an X on the continuum to show how you rate**



1 = They don't know very much    3 = They know something about it    5 = They know a lot

**DISCUSSION:** HOW DO STUDENTS FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR LEARNING?



## **TEACHER DISCUSSION MIGHT INCLUDE.....**

- Self- perception of your role

**DISCUSSION:** WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE ABOUT YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER?

- **Appraisal**
- **Classroom observation**
- **Student evaluation**
- **Examination data**
- **Parent feedback**
- **Students' engagement and happiness**
- **Self-fulfilment**
- **Anecdotal**

- Student relationships

**DISCUSSION:** HOW DO YOU GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS?

- **Know their names**
- **Greet them whenever they come into the classrooms**
- **Know about their family/siblings**
- **1:1 feedback about learning**
- **Aware of their needs**
- **Aware of school data – tracking**
- **Co-curricular involvement**

- Students' learning

**DISCUSSION:** HOW DO STUDENTS FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR LEARNING?

- **Course outlines**
- **Learning Objectives**
- **WALT**
- **Reconnect to prior learning**
- **Ask them**
- **Share Success Criteria – what they need to do to achieve**
- **Strategies for teaching and learning**

**DISCUSSION:** WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES YOU USE TO ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS IN THEIR LEARNING?

- **Working in pairs – fours**
- **Working in groups – mixed gender**
- **Use mind maps**
- **Vary the style of learning; visuals, colour, auditory, written, kinaesthetic**

- Review of teaching and learning

**DISCUSSION:** WHAT TYPE OF INFORMATION HELPS YOU TO REVIEW AND PLAN YOUR TEACHING AND LEARNING?

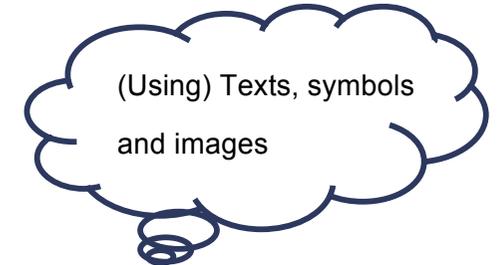
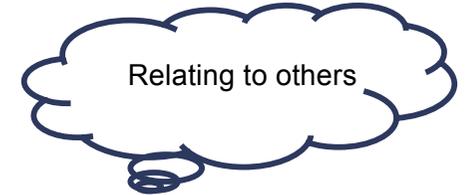
- **Appraisal**
- **Lesson observation**
- **Student evaluations**
- **Feedback and feedforward to students**
- **Department reviews of department goals**
- **Examination data**

# My India

Issues that will affect your life

*Appendix 2*

		<b>Age</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Stage of life</b>
Social (family)		12/13	2015	Education
Cultural (tradition/religious/ethnicity)		22/23	2025	Job
		32/33	2035	Married
Environmental (global/national)	Hopes and dreams	42/43	2045	Family
Political (law/customs)		52/53	2055	
Spiritual (religious)	Fears and	62/63	2065	Retirement Grandparents



5 groups of 4-5
4 groups of 5-6

- ➔ Read
- ➔ Write
- ➔ Visual
- ➔ Kinesthetic

- Include:
- ➔ Numeracy
  - ➔ Science
  - ➔ English