



Jamaica – 150 years on – a celebration of joy!



Monday January 7 2008

I wonder what it felt like – one hundred and fifty years ago – when Mother Veronica Cordier, with three sisters willing to join her:

Sr. M. Paula Charlet (a French sister)

Sr. M. de Sales O'Neill, and

Sr. Philomena Dalle (a lay sister)

sailed from Liverpool to Kingston, Jamaica to help in the education of the island's children.

History was indeed repeating itself. Just as Veronica, responding to a request for help, had come to Liverpool and then on to Glasgow to work with the local clergy in supporting and educating the children of the East-end (bringing with her the first presence of sisters in the West of Scotland since the Reformation), so now she left Glasgow for Liverpool and onwards to Jamaica bringing with her that same gift.

It took them one month to cross the oceans and seas in a clipper!



It took us a little under ten and a half hours flying time today – Glasgow to London, London to Jamaica. It was dark when we arrived and we were escorted and fast tracked through Immigration and baggage reclaim by an Information Officer who had been detailed to “meet and greet” us. No queues for us – the spoiled children of God (I guess the sisters had some ‘clout’ with the Airport Authorities). This, I am sure, was a far cry from Veronica's arrival 150 years ago.

Photographed with luggage at the airport, we made our way by car along the Palisades Road (between the river and the sea), past a towering cement factory on one side of the road and an equally towering flour mill on the other, to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception – a former grand hotel – situated on the Campus of both the Preparatory and High Schools.

All the way home Sr. Maureen Clare was in touch with the house so that the welcoming committee could be in place!!! – and they were!!!

The sisters welcomed us with song (specially written) and, yes, more photographs which were being put on the website tonight.

With a five hour time difference it was now 1.00 a.m. at home and only 9.00 p.m. Jamaican time.

Tea and bed and, oh yes.....mosquito bites in profusion!



Tuesday 8 January

We are not so different, you and I.....

Mass at 6.45 a.m. wasn't as bad as I thought. I was awake and bright-eyed and joined Eleanor and the others in the Convent Chapel.

Poinsettias grow tall in the grounds here and festooned the Chapel – still with its Crib, Christmas decorations and lights. Wreaths adorn the pillars and quietly we recite the familiar prayers.

No distance or separation here – the closeness of the prayer, the distance only miles!

Three sisters are brought to Mass in wheelchairs – Sr. Cecile, Sr. Jean Vincent and Sr. Adele (both New Yoikers!) by auxiliary helpers. Another sister, Clare Marie, has Alzheimer's and is gently guided through the prayers. Sr. Cecile is deaf and so, at breakfast, I write "I am from Scotland" on a scrap of paper. She smiles at adds "Wales and Ireland" – not sure what happened to England!

After breakfast (when I have to acknowledge having eaten too much – great muffins!), Sr. Maureen Clare took us to see the Immaculate Conception High School (known as simply 'Immaculate'). As we walked towards the school through the sunken garden, the wild orchids and bougainvillea bloom in great profusion. Butterflies flit in and out of the flowers and Maureen shows us her favourite tree in the whole world – a French Peanut Tree with a magnificent trunk and branches - one she has known since childhood. It's huge and we both talk of what the tree has seen and of the carvings on the trunk.

The school is quieter today because of parent/teacher conferences. The term begins tomorrow when 1,600 young ladies will return, making this a bustling campus.

We return to the convent and as I peek through the open kitchen door some of the Kindergarten students are making their way to P.E., a rainbow line in red, yellow and blue; they are displaying their House colours. Doing their very best to behave, they smile and wave and I wish I had brought my camera! I look at them and am reminded of *The Sorting Hat and Hogwarts* (cue *Harry Potter* fans!).

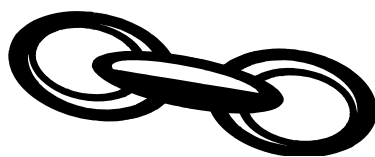
The school buildings – Prep and High – are pink and in Maureen Clare's time as Principal of the High School (27 years as Principal) it was heard tell that the students referred to the school as the Pink Prison!!

I thought it was amusing that Eleanor could give a similar example. When she became Principal on the High School in Altoona (PA) it was called the Zoo. During her time there it became known as “Scotland Yard”!

A very fine young lady, one of the Sixth Form Prefects was detailed to meet us and, along with the Vice-Principal showed us around the building. Eleanor was impressed with the school’s layout and was in her element as she discussed all things educational! It is easy to see why it is her great passion.

Mosquito bites notwithstanding we are, this afternoon, off to see the Bishops – well actually the Archbishop and the Archbishop in waiting – Archbishop Lawrence Burke and his Coadjutor, Bishop Donald Reece. Bishop Reece knows Archbishop Conti having worked with him on the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

As we entered the Chancery building a sister in a blue habit was just leaving. It transpired that she is the Superior General of the “Blue Sisters” who themselves were founded, at the request of the bishop of the time, by a Franciscan Sister of Allegany. We are going to meet them before we leave. The link in the chain goes on and on.....



We had a 45 minute meeting with the bishops and it will, I think, be one of the highlights of our visit to Jamaica. They are both men for this time (age notwithstanding) and shared a lot with us of life and ministry.

Eleanor presented Archbishop Burke with a bottle of Glenfiddich and a tin of extra special shortbread. He referred to the whisky as “the creature”. I explained

that it was better known as “the crater” – this to a man who had freshly baked Irish soda bread waiting for him at home and has been known to sing in a pub in Gweedor, Ireland!

It was a fine visit with fine pastoral and compassionate leaders. The Church in Kingston is truly blessed in their Shepherds.

Wednesday 9 January

“If you have not love, you are as a gong sounding or a cymbal clashing...” I may not be listing to gongs and cymbals as I rise to the new day and the early morning sunshine, but I am certainly listening to the familiar sound of the Jamaican car horn!! It is so much a necessary part of driving here, both as a way of finding a space on the overcrowded roads and as a courtesy to others who give way to you – a way of saying thank you. Horns of all kinds – a real cacophony of sound.

What will this day be like, I wonder...

It has been beautiful sunny and warm with the promise of Spring as the new term begins for the staff and students of the Immaculate Conception High School (ICHS).

Could Mother Veronica ever have foreseen the generations of girls who, like their counterparts in Our Lady and St Francis Secondary School (Charlotte Street), Glasgow, would richly grace this earth. I hope as she looks down on us from heaven she is smiling as we smile back – yes, Mother, this was all your idea!

The tour of the Preparatory School was as bright as the children in it and it was a joy to be there. There are five young ladies, past pupils of the High School, who have returned to teach in the Prep – a true testimony to the role the sisters have

played in passing on the seeds of education to new educators. One young lady, in response to my remarking how special her choice was to teach, said “and why not, we have a treasure to pass on!” Testimony indeed.



It is not difficult to see the similarities between ICHS and OLSF, Charlotte Street. Had Charlotte Street remained open, who knows....what stories could be told?

This One Nation of Many cultures is a jewel in the Caribbean and I have to keep pinching myself to believe I am here.

The excitement is growing and the General Minister of the Congregation, herself a past pupil of ICHS, arrives tomorrow (Sr. Avril Chin Fatt, osf).

Mass this evening is at 5.30 p.m. and will give us an opportunity to praise God for this day.

There were several new arrivals tonight – Sr. Mary Murphy from Tampa, Florida and Sr. Odette also from Tampa. The flight from Tampa takes only one and a half hours. It makes perfect sense to me now that the Jesuits would have asked the fledgling congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany to take our pioneers under their wings. They could get here (by boat – albeit it banana boat!) much quicker than anyone could have from Scotland.

“Lead kindly light”....the lights went out in the city tonight just before supper so we all ate by storm lantern and battery operated lamps. It certainly brought new meaning to the more romantic *candlelit supper!* Having eaten turkey soup and

coconut macaroons in the dark, I made my way to the large entrance hall where Eleanor and I sat on easy chairs and chatted the night away until what we thought was a reasonable time for bed! I hope the mosquitoes couldn't see me in the dark! I was amazed to fall asleep immediately.

Thursday 10 January

Did notice the lights had come on at some point during the night (found out it was actually as early as 11.00 p.m.) and rose at 5.30 a.m. to go for a cup of tea! Was I an early bird? No sireeeeeeee. Sisters were up and about and by 6.30 a.m. students were arriving for school. Sr. Angela the Head Teacher, looked in to the dining room on her way by, saw me and cried "Look at her, she is up and so bright eyed". I hasten to add that I was in my pyjamas and intended to go back to bed for a while.

When I wake up in the morning here I feel very much at home – no feelings of strange places. It's noisy certainly with dogs barking, fans whirring and cars tooting horns, but some how it all melts away.

"Store up your treasure...." Ah well, the Lord knows I like to shop and I am sure he won't mind that Eleanor and I were off to the Craft Shop seeking treasure of a different kind today. Sr. Maureen Clare took us out at 10.15 a.m. and dropped us at one of the many city malls. She introduced us to the owner of one of the best known craft shops in town. The lady is (as you may have guessed) a past pupil of ICHS and promised us a discount.

We got a few small things to bring home and having come safely back, we now know where the laundry is and can wash and iron before coming home.

Mass is at 5.30 p.m. and as the time is now 4.35 I am going to go downstairs and sit for a while, remembering with gratitude all my sisters here and at home, asking the Lord to bless us in our comings and goings.

Friday 11 January

First on this morning's order of service was Mass at 6.45 a.m. (for which I slept in!) and at 7.30 a.m. a radio interview with Jamaica Radio Hot 101. Yes, it's official, I'm a media star!! Along with Sr. Maureen Clare (whose birthday it is today), I started off a series of interviews, tracing the beginnings of the schools and the part of the pioneering Franciscan Sisters in bringing education to Jamaica. It was a privilege to do so and as these days progress and we go towards the climax of Sunday's Eucharistic celebration, Eleanor and I both realise how much these sisters are family and what a treasure we as FSIC's hold. Our history has come alive on the faces of so many and in the stories of many others and what is most important of all, it is a his-STORY still being written. I will take back from this visit a new awakening of the treasure we hold in Scotland. It may be in an *earthen vessel*, but all the best treasures are!!

Next thing on the agenda is the ground breaking ceremony at the Summer House at which Eleanor will give our best wishes for the success of the project.

More later...

As part of the 150th celebrations, the Alumnae Associations of Florida and Jamaica have jointly undertaken a project to renovate the Summer House on the Campus. Here in the past girls would sit on the polished wooden floor and watch plays – sometimes competing in groups for the best acting performance. It was also a some time gym and dance auditorium. Built in the style of an elegant Band Stand, although much larger, it is now in need of a new roof and a new floor. All of this is now in hand and I am sure that with the enthusiasm shown at today's

ribbon cutting ceremony, this project is certain to succeed. Eleanor was asked to say a few words, wishing the project well – and she did so admirably!

Both Alumnae Associations were represented as were the students of the High School.

After lunch I left on the Franciscan Ministries Bus with Sr. Grace to pick up the young volunteers from St Bonaventure's University, upstate New York, who have for the past week been working in the Trenchtown area of Jamaica – the poorest and most run down area in the inner city. Now I know what the sisters who have been to Nigeria and Kenya are talking about when the talk of “shanty towns”. It is a dangerous area too but Sr. Grace is well known and as she drives through the streets people shout and wave at her.

She is a generous lady because although I was ‘along for the ride’ she stopped to let me speak to Boss who works in a project set up with her support. He cuts alabaster stone and shapes it into various items for sale. I also met Patrick Lee – a real Rastafarian – who runs another small project “Pee-Lee's Ceramics”.

This is another piece of the heart of the Franciscan Vocation – here in Constant Spring Road we have the heart of Education. Join Grace's travelling band and you have the heart of the Poverello, reaching out to the poor, the marginalised and perhaps the ‘lepers’ of today. Grace, I am humbled before you and I laud your wonderful spirit.



The young people had one stop on the way home to pick up some souvenirs and three of them are having their hair braided before a short Service of Thanksgiving and Closure at 6.00 p.m. and then off to the *Rib Cage* for some ribs I guess!!!

In the evening, at 7.00 p.m. there was a small dinner at the Poolside, given by Yasmin (Chair Person of the 150th Celebrations) to welcome the “special guests” to Jamaica. These included Sr. Avril, General Minister, Alumnae from New York, Florida and Jamaica as well as three Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception who had flown in from Boston in the late afternoon. These sisters are also founded from our Congregation and they are overjoyed to meet all of us – Scots and Jamaicans!!!

Saturday 12 January

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café... or ... Steamed Green Bananas at the Immaculate Conception Convent!

Following Mass (at 7.30 a.m.) we had breakfast. I pause here .. because this was a traditional Jamaican breakfast and was indeed something to behold! I tried the *Ackee and Saltfish* (cod) mixed with onion! I also tried the steamed *Bammy* which is a cake made from the *Cassava* root, steamed *Calaloo*, a green leafy vegetable from the Spinach family, baked *Breadfruit* and last, but not least, steamed green bananas (sorry, this reminded me of Fried Green Tomatoes, etc.). Well now, this is a steep learning curve. In the end I had to give in and have a slice of toast with ham!

How I love this country!

After breakfast we were to leave at 9.30 a.m. to take a quick tour of the Island's educational establishments. True to *Jamaican Time* we left at 10.00 a.m. and set off, taking in *The University of Jamaica*, *The University of the West Indies*,

***Alvernia Prep School* (a co-educational school run by the Sisters), and we passed Duke Street, the site of Mother Veronica's first school on the island.**

When I remarked to Sr. Avril (Tour Guide and some time Congregational Minister!!) that there were a lot of schools, she said that 50% of Jamaican's population are under 15 years of age. A lot of children live here!

We stopped to visit the non-denominational University Chapel and a Christening party was just leaving. The women in the party became very excited when they spotted the sisters. Yes, you've guessed it – Alumnae of Immaculate! This reminds me so much of Charlotte Street and the camaraderie which exists with its ex-pupils.

Home for lunch and at last Eleanor and I had an opportunity spend an hour in the swimming pool – even if the sun had disappeared behind the clouds. We enjoyed it and I've just checked up on the Celtic result on the web. Content that they have won, I've had a cup of tea and am now off to relax for a bit before supper.

As I close this part of my journal, I thank God for the Charism which binds us together and for the joy of the followers of Francis.

Sunday 13th January

The day of celebration has finally arrived and excitement is in the air – even at 6.30 a.m. when sisters begin to arrive for breakfast. Sr. Angella is the *good Samaritan* who has prepared eggs, sausage and hot donuts. Most of us won't eat again until closer to 12.00 noon so it is good to have something hot to fortify us for the short journey to Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Even at 8.00 a.m. the place is bustling. The large choir is already in place – students from the Prep and High Schools, a young opera singer (daughter of a

former student of ICHS), Candice Hoyes, is singing the *Panis Angelicus* after Communion and Donna Haynes (an affiliate of the community here and another Alumna) is the Cantor. The music is directed – and some of it written by – yes you’ve guest it – another former pupil, Allison Wallace.

The words “phenomenal women” is on everyone’s lips as people file into the Cathedral. Guests include the Prime Minister and his wife and the Governor General and his wife as well as local dignitaries, parents, students, parishioners and friends of *Immaculate*.

The Archbishop of Kingston, Most Rev. Lawrence Burke, S.J., his Coadjutor, Bishop Donald Reece and the Bishop of Montego Bay, Most Rev. Charles Dufour concelebrate the Mass with other priests of the diocese.

What can I say – it was a wonderful celebration of the past, the present and the future and when it was time for the Presentation of the Gifts, I clasped my large Royal Stuart tartan rug cradling a Blue Mahoe Tree seedling. The Blue Mahoe is the National Tree of Jamaica and we will plant it tomorrow in the grounds of the school and, God willing, it will grow tall and strong over the next 150 years and those who will look at it may whisper “The Franciscan Sisters from Scotland planted this tree....”



Eleanor carried the recently written book on our history with her medallion draped carefully over it, cradled in the flag of St Andrew. The only thing missing was the skirl of the bagpipes, but that would come later at the Brunch.



Following us came students from the Prep and High Schools carrying their Coat s of Arms; Sr. Angella came next carrying the symbol of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. Last, but not least, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, with Sr. Mary Murphy of the Allegany Franciscans, brought up the gifts of bread and wine.

Sr. Avril Chin Fatt, Congregational Minister, welcomed everyone to the celebration and after the Post Communion prayer, Eleanor gave our greetings – she “did us proud” and at one point, having told the girls that their school was the best on the Island, the place erupted with cheering and applause (naturally!). She certainly put a smile on the faces of everyone present.

Following the singing of the National Anthem, the School songs and the final hymn we had our picture taken with the bishops and walked across to St George’s College Auditorium for Brunch. St George’s College is one of two Jesuit Colleges in Kingston (the other is Campion College).

Oh yes ... Eleanor had her picture taken with the Prime Minister too!!

Brunch was, as you may imagine, traditionally Jamaican and once we were settled and eating, the morning and early afternoon was interspersed with speeches, laughter, singing and great joy. Students from Immaculate were busy showing their entrepreneurial skills, selling everything from pens to shirts bearing the logo of the schools.

I had an opportunity to renew some old acquaintances and make some new ones!

I managed to slip in just before the end and to the strains of Amazing Grace on the bagpipes I made my way to the stage and after a very few words, presented

Sr. Avril with a slate from the original roof of St Mary's Parish Church, Abercromby Street, Glasgow which is the parish in which the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception were founded in 1847. Eleanor and I sang the Blessing of St Francis and it was soon time to go back to Constant Spring Road.

[I have worked closely with Mgr. Peter Smith, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Glasgow and Parish Priest of St Mary's, for almost two decades and I will enjoy recounting my days in Jamaica to him. He is very interested in the history of his parish which is one of the oldest in the Archdiocese – not far from St Andrew's Cathedral where the First Professions of our sisters took place.]

Pace e Bene.

Monday 14th January

**Lord, you are the Master Gardener, and
in your providence you show
the simple planting of a seedling
brings forth a Blue Mahoe.**

**Now the tree is gently planted in
this fine Jamaican ground, and
the love so clearly present
will ensure that it is sound.**

**In the changing of the seasons, and
the ageing of our years;
May it grow and may it listen
to our laughter and our tears.**

The seedling is carefully planted in the grounds of ICHS Campus and as Sr. Angella said at Assembly this morning, may it be for the present students a sign of the 150 years yet to come. Eleanor and I, along with other invited guests, spoke very briefly at Assembly. It was an amazing sight – 1,600 young ladies dressed in blue and white, seated on the ground of the assembly area.

Students from both the Preparatory and High Schools were present at the Tree Planting Ceremony and I was honoured to place the seedling in the ground. I have a feeling that I now *belong to this land* and I thank God for the providence which brings me here.

After saying our goodbyes to Sr. Avril, who leaves this afternoon, we set off in two cars, for downtown and Duke Street where St Aloysius Primary Co-educational school is situated on the original site of Mother Veronica's first school. The original buildings were destroyed by a fire in 1937. However the school is thriving with classes of 40/45 students. To my untrained eye it seemed almost impossible that teachers could cope in such an environment, but I know so little of these things and the love, dedication and hard work of the teachers is there for all to see. The Principal of the Infant School (4s and 5s) is herself a past pupil of St Aloysius Primary, Immaculate Conception High School and St Joseph's College. She is a Franciscan girl through and through!

From St Aloysius we made our way to Alvernia and the cemetery where our first sisters are buried.



Here another Blue Mahoe seedling was planted by Sr. Suzanne of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

The cemetery is on part of what is a very large campus containing St Francis' Primary School, St Joseph's Teacher-Training College and Alvernia Preparatory School. The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany are present in one way or another in all of these Institutions. Sr. Teresita is responsible for Campus Ministry at St Joseph's College and other sisters are members of the Boards of all the schools I have mentioned, bringing with them a live and active ministry, supporting the Mission and Vision Statements of the institutions.

It will come as no surprise to anyone to know that the names of the areas around the Campus are, for example, "El Greccio", Portiuncula, etc. etc.

I was definitely wilting in the heat and a cold drink in "Sr. Avril Chin Fatt Building" was very welcome!! I thought I was a star, but it's really Avril who is the star!! I noticed from a plaque in the entrance hall that Avril was the first Jamaican Principal of the College (1997-2003).

We have Thalia Lynn to thank for lunch at *The Island Grill*, which is not all that unlike McDonald's or Burger King, and after lunch we arrived safely home. A welcome cup of tea for me and a rest before Mass this evening.

There are guests for supper this evening – members of a Franciscan Community. More to come....

Two members of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist and two Friars, ofm (Conventual) were guests at supper which was a noisy and joyous occasion. Before they left we once again sang our blessing and this was followed by the "Jamaican Blessing of St Francis" which was WONDERFUL!! I have to make sure I have the music before I go home.

Tuesday 15th January

*The hills are alive with the sound of music.....*and so much more as we made our way after breakfast to Highgate and Marymount High School, established in 1935.

In founding the mission at Highgate the sisters moved away from the city and into the rural area beyond Broadgate and Golden Spring. We drove passed Immaculate Conception Church and onwards through the lush green vegetation and tall trees. The *Flame of the Forest* is an eye catcher, with beautiful red flowers. Tropical blooms are everywhere and I am reminded of the flower seller in Princes Square, Glasgow, who sells just such tropical blooms – at exorbitant prices!!

On arrival at Highgate we were met by the Principal of Marymount, Joan Gopie. The school has 840 girls who travel in from the surrounding areas – some as far as 20 miles away. The Chairman of the Board was also there, Mr Wilson Kong (or Brockins as he is more familiarly known!). He is a local business man and a Permanent Deacon.

After touring the school and the original convent building – now part of the school – we moved to the newer convent and had lunch with Sr. Coleen (Juicee). It was good to see her and after lunch, including home-made guava juice, we walked around her garden as she taught us about the various plants, trees and fruits – including pineapples, June plums, mangoes, lignum vitae – “Long Life” or “Tree of Life” (national flower of Jamaica), ginger lilies, etc. etc.

It's just wonderful to have the time to enjoy such beauty.



Lignum Vitae Flower

We set off for home and a short rest before going for afternoon tea to Margaret and Denis Stephens. Sr. Grace was kind enough to take us, having recovered from a fall yesterday when she banged her head. Margaret is a native of Glasgow (a graduate from the University of Glasgow School of Dentistry) and has spent over 40 years now in Jamaica. She and Denis have two lovely daughters and two handsome grandsons!

I think she enjoyed our Scottish accents and the sound of home. I know I enjoyed spending an hour or so with them. I was especially pleased to see a picture of one of their grandsons with a Celtic shirt on. It just goes to show that they are on the right track!!!

Home for supper and this Journal entry.

Oh, almost forgot .. the ride up the mountain was a “white knuckle” one for Eleanor who rode in the front of the car. It was quite a ride!

Take time to smell the flowers.... Tomorrow is a “rest day” and I hope to simply walk in the gardens and campus and look at the flowers and maybe take a picture of a butterfly if I am lucky. It will also give me an opportunity to gather my thoughts.

We'll see ... there may be something for the Journal!

Wednesday 16th January

There's no place like home.. and home is exactly where we stayed today. It was warm! I missed the pancakes at breakfast but Carol (at Sr. Grace's request) made me four small ones for lunchtime! I now have to admit to having Shepherd's pie, pancakes and a piece of pineapple! I also did my washing today and will iron later this evening or tomorrow.

Sr. Mary Murphy left this morning and gave Eleanor and me some beautiful cards, by the Sisters of St Joseph of La Grange. I've seen their work before and it is really beautiful, in quite a different style from the sisters of Allegany, whose work is also beautiful and reflective of nature and their beautiful island paradise.

This afternoon, after taking some time to walk around the campus, I joined Eleanor in going across to the Music Room to help the girls choose a Scottish Folk Song for the Trinity College Examination. It looks as if we have all settled on "The Skye Boat Song" and I am sure they will do a beautiful job! I just wish I could hear it when it's finished. What we were treated to was a rendition of "The Rose" – wonderful!



I am going down to the Chapel now to take a bit of quiet time before Mass and will bring all the sisters home and abroad with me, remembering especially those in Kenya and our older and infirm sisters.

Thanks are due to so many who have been so kind, including Jeanne (Mrs M!) who gave us two of the commemorative books today and Sr. Marita who also gave us some lovely cards.

Oh yes, I managed to dodge the dishes tonight – you know, just one of those things, was talking too much as usual and took too long over my tea.

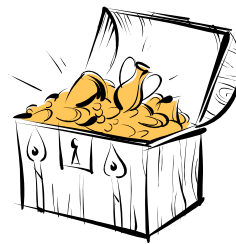
Thursday 17th January

Yo ho ho and a bottle of (Morgan's) Rum.....

Later morning and after breakfast, around 11.30 a.m., Eleanor and I set off with Sr. Grace for Morgan's Harbour – for the uninitiated this is the *real* home of “Pirates of the Carribean”.

Crossing the Palisade once more we set off on the airport road and continued on to Morgan's Harbour. The harbour is in the famous historical town of Port Royal, whose fame rivalled that of Jamaica itself. It was first the home of plundering pirates such as ‘Black Beard’ and ‘Sir Henry Morgan’ after whom the hotel was named. It was once labelled *the wickedest and most sinful city in the world*.

Traces of Port Royal's legacy remain beneath the sea – two thirds of the city sank in the earthquake of June 7 1692. Known as “the city that sank”, it is considered the most important archaeological site in the western hemisphere, yielding 16th and 17th artefacts by the ton.



We were able to see the Parade Ground and the remains of Fort Charles before having lunch at Morgan's Harbour. It was a beautiful day and the view allowed us to see the sheer scale of Kingston's Harbour, the seventh largest in the world.

On our way home from the sea, we stopped at the Motherhouse of the Blue Sisters, a Diocesan Congregation founded at the request of the Bishop by the

Allegany Franciscans. The sisters were kind enough to show us around their very spacious house and after a cold drink we headed for home and Mass.

It was kind of the sisters to have the Mass celebrated for us and we truly appreciated the kindness. We all had an opportunity to thank each other at supper when Jamaican and Scottish folk songs rang through the old rafters.

I will be bringing the journal to a close as we leave tomorrow, though not before a visit to the Preparatory School for Assembly and the High School for Mass.

These have been wonderful days and the historical connection between our two congregations has been cemented in stories, in laughter, in memories and in prayer.

We will not wait for another 150 years to walk these shores, of that I am sure. As we think fondly of Mother Veronica, Mother Paula and the sisters who came from the USA, themselves pioneers, we give thanks to God for a glorious history, ask him to bless today and look forward with hope to the future.

The sisters have christened me “Margaret of Scotland” – I like it!

Pace e Bene



Margaret of Scotland, osf !!

17th January 2008