

Holy Family Centre
Christmas Newsletter 2005

Dear Friends of Holy Family,

Another year is drawing to a close and we would like to thank you for all you have done for us during the past year. We are deeply grateful for your help and we would not be able to continue to care for the children without your support and friendship.

We would like to give you some Holy Family news for 2005. For the first time our numbers increased to 54. This is the maximum number of children that we can take and we feel that to expand the project would mean that it would become too institutional and we would lose the family spirit that is so characteristic of Holy Family. We are able to keep this spirit at present because there are two groups, one group comprises the bigger children and the other is for the little children. The bigger children are a wonderful help and they do a lot to help care for the smaller children.

The past year has been a very busy one because we have improved the facilities with various building projects. We now have a crèche and an anti-retroviral clinic. We have also added an office, treatment room and frail care ward to one of the existing buildings. The latter was a very urgent need because we were working in cramped conditions. Many people have helped us with these building projects and we would like to thank them very especially.

This year we sent 24 children to the nearby farm primary school. Despite the fact that some of them miss school because of ill health, they have all passed their exams and have been promoted to the next grade. Quite a few of these children came to us without any education at all and were already older than they should have been for starting school. So, they are getting a chance that they would not have had in the village. The staff at the school work very closely with us and really care about our children. This year 3 girls passed their Grade 7 exam and they have been given bursaries to attend St Brendan's High School as boarders. They will still be part of Holy family but they are being given a chance for higher education at a very good school.

We have lost several children this year and this is always very sad for us all. However, now that the children are receiving anti-retroviral treatment there is a lot of improvement in their health. Not all the children need this treatment but those that do are very courageous because during the first few months there are unpleasant side effects. However, these lessen as their bodies adapt to the medication. The South African Bishop's Conference together with Catholic Relief Services from America are responsible for our anti-retroviral programme and with their help we have constructed an anti-retroviral clinic which now provides help for 400 HIV/Aids positive people from the surrounding villages. This is providing a wonderful chance for "life" for many people.

2005 marks the beginning of our new crèche for the little children with a properly trained crèche teacher. There are about 23 children in the crèche and they love it. They are learning many things that are vital for their development because quite a few of them have been severely affected by malnutrition and they have not reached their developmental milestones at the age that they should. One little boy is only just beginning to talk and he is already 4 years old. Eight of the children at the crèche will go to primary school next year. One of

these is a little boy who has been on an oxygen machine for several years. He is improving with the anti-retroviral treatment and we plan to send him to school for a couple of hours three times a week.

We are encouraging the children to be involved in extra-curricular activities. Twice a week after school one of the staff teaches them traditional dancing and singing which they love. Another afternoon they have bible stories and scripture in action. The bigger girls have all learnt to make bread and they are excellent at it. Every Saturday they make bread and buns for all the children. Sport is also an important part of the daily programme. During the Christmas holidays we have asked someone to teach the girls to sew their clothes. They also do quite a lot on Saturday to help with the work in the garden and with keeping the place nice.

During the year we have taken them on a few outings, for example, to Moholoholo Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, to Kruger Park, to Tzaneen and Lekgalametse Nature Reserve. We would like to take them for more excursions but we are too busy with the project. This would be a wonderful opportunity for volunteers with vehicles to help us.

Once again we would like to thank you very sincerely for all your help. Every contribution, no matter how big or how, small is greatly appreciated.

We wish you many blessings for Christmas and the New Year. May the Lord gift you with his love, joy and peace, especially for you and your families.

With gratitude from

*Srs Pauline, Marie, Lee, Dain
and all the children at Holy Family.*