

The fact that one of my family members had plenty of money did not protect him from the heart-ache of having a son who became a drug addict.

So, all over the world, people are walking uphill, facing lives that are difficult. Some lives are much more difficult than others, I know. I think of parts of Africa with no rain and an estimated 11 million children who have no father and mother because the HIV/AIDS epidemic has taken around 25% of the young adult population. Bangladesh is rich compared to parts of Africa at the moment. You and I are so lucky to have enough to eat and health care and people to care for us. We are being strengthened for the journey of life that lies ahead of us, where the road to responsible living will be uphill for much of the way. But, if you and I live responsibly, the world will become a better place. God bless you.



THE DREAM OF A GROUP OF ARTISTS BECOMES AN ART EXHIBITION HERE!

Assembly 30 – February 26th 2003

We have been thinking this week of the martyrs, the witnesses, the people who remind us that nothing that is truly great happens without sacrifice. Life is difficult and we need people who say, “Yes, OK. It is difficult, but it is not impossible – so we shall do it!”

We think of the founding of this school which began with a dream in the heads of a small group of people – and here we are, 3 years later – not perfect but working at it and with a lot to be proud of.

A few years ago, a group of artists had the dream of taking really good works of art and exhibiting them in schools round Dhaka. In some ways, it was a crazy idea. Good paintings are

worth a great deal of money. Was it not too risky? But this group of artists said, “We must give men and women, boys and girls, the chance to see and appreciate real works of art. We can do it!” And they did! It is our pleasure and our privilege to be host to this wonderful exhibition for the next few days. Lots of people will be coming in and climbing our stairs to the exhibition. Please be very polite with our visitors. Smile at them and say welcome and behave well on the stairs.

The exhibition will be opened at 11.00am this morning by a famous artist – Mustafa Monwar. You too will have an opportunity to see the exhibition in your Art classes and, as you look at it, remember what a lot of hard work and organising has gone into it but how much we appreciate it. As always, the more you put into life, the more you, and others, can get out of it.

God bless you.



IDENTITY DISKS – WHO WANTS A LABEL?

Assembly 31 – February 31st 2003

I think that the office has now given most of us our identity disks to hang round our necks. They are very smart. But when I was given mine, I had mixed feelings. There was a voice inside me that said, “Why do I need a label? I am not a parcel!” But I thought about it and realised there are many reasons why we have our identity labels. Can you think of any?

Intruders! The school guards must have a way of identifying you for when you are collected. Sometimes, when I go off on my own into the streets of Dhaka, I wear my label in case I am in an accident. I have had a rickshaw accident, a baby taxi accident and a car accident, since I have been in Bangladesh so I know the roads are not safe.

Our labels are a sensible response to the fact that 'Life is difficult'. We live in a society and world, with many problems – but we can learn many techniques for survival. Another reason for our labels is for identification if there was a fire in the school or in an earthquake. Soon we shall have fire practices and then, when you have proved how clever and quick and quiet you are to get out of the building and complete your class register, we shall then study the best techniques for if there is an earthquake. Life is difficult, but for every difficulty, although we cannot do everything, we can do something, to be sensible and make sure that as few people as possible are hurt. Your school and your home have a duty to prepare you for life and, although we all want the lives of children to be lovely and simple and safe, life is not always lovely and simple and safe – and we must do our best to prepare you for those times when life is difficult.

God bless you.



SCHOOL PRAYER 1. OUR CREATOR

Assembly 32 – Sunday March 2nd

This week, I thought I would talk to you about the words of the prayer that we use every morning in Assembly. When I first came here, I was very pleased to hear the nice prayer you were already saying. I am sure those of all faiths can feel comfortable about saying it. All the major religions say that there is a High Power that created us - the Creator (*Sristikorta*) - and say that this Higher Power is good. It must be awful to worship a god who behaves badly and demands that his worshippers do terrible things. But the major religions of the world agree that the Higher Power above us is good and loving and asks us to be good and loving also.

The prayer begins 'O Almighty God' – and the word 'all – mighty' (*shorboshoktiman*) reminds us how great is a God who was responsible for creating this beautiful world – out of nothing. Can you imagine nothing? That is the hardest thing of all to imagine – nothing. Whatever was the power that made something out of nothing must be the greatest power of all. When you and I make something, we can only make something out of something, can't we? We take various things and make a new thing out of them. It is only the human creativity in art and music and literature that comes nearest to making something out of nothing.

I wonder if some of you watch the nature programmes on television – do you? Do you see pictures of other countries and their peoples, of animals, of life under the sea, life under the microscope and life among the stars? The more we know, the more amazed we are at this beautiful world around us. There was a time, about 100 years ago, when some scientists became very proud. They said that science was about to make such wonderful discoveries that they would then be able to say that Science can explain everything – religion would be unnecessary. There would be no more mystery to life. When the atom was discovered, some scientists said, "Now we have discovered the basic building block of the universe – and we will be able to explain everything!"

And guess what? They discovered that the atom could be divided and, through more and more powerful microscopes, they discovered that the world of the very, very SMALL was more and more complicated than they had ever imagined. As astronomers discovered more and more about the universe, they discovered that the world of the very, very BIG was more and more complicated than they had ever imagined. Science could *look* for the answers but it could not find *all* the answers. Mystery had not been defeated. Science has become humble again in the face of the mystery of life itself.