

A short report from St. Mary Magdalen School, Riwoto

Fr Tim Galvin

On 3 May 2021, all schools in South Sudan opened after being closed for nearly four months because of Covid-19. St. Mary Magdalen school reopened that day. Teachers had already come by Saturday, 1 May. There was a big influx of new pupils during the first week. Many came from the villages nearby. It shows that the local people now are realizing more the importance of education and a good number are girls. During the month of April we had visited the villages around and spoke to the people about the importance of education. The parents responded well. In all over one thousand children have registered this year. The big majority are in the nursery section. We had to employ three extra nursery school teachers. There are twenty teachers included in the teaching staff of the school including three sisters of Mary Mother of the Church who are administering the school. There is a boarding section in the school of 83 boys and 125 girls. In all there are 335 girls in the school now.

For two weeks at the beginning the parish had to buy food for the school until WFP started to bring food. We are grateful to WFP for the food which they are bringing faithfully. Without that support it would be difficult to maintain this school as it is now. We are grateful to an organization called AVSI who are an organization working in South Sudan helping with education, who have erected two blocks of latrines and have also given the school fifty desks. With the help of a donor from Ireland we were able to install four energy saving stoves in the school kitchen. This reduces the consumption of firewood and also there is less smoke going into the atmosphere. It is a much healthier kitchen now for the cooks to be working in.

In February of this year, fifty-three candidates from St. Mary Magdalen School sat for the primary leaving examination of South Sudan. It was the first time that the school had candidates for the primary 8 exam. The results came out last week and all the candidates passed the examination. The pupils were happy to have passed the examination. The success is due to the hard work of the administration, firstly the Holy Faith sisters followed by the Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, also the teachers, school staff and parents and of course the students themselves.

There is an expectation among those who passed to go to secondary school. However there is no functioning secondary school at the moment in Riwoto. The parish is building a secondary school now which we hope will be opened next year. Many of the pupils are waiting for the school in the parish to be opened so that they may join the secondary school next year.

I wish to thank the Holy Faith sisters for taking on this venture in 2013 and it has been successful due to the solid foundations that was built during the first three years.