

Cluny Students from New Zealand Reach out to Samoan Children

Sister Emeli Flavia

Manuia Le Aso from Tauranga to you all.

On October 5, I left Tauranga with Teresa Rush, one of our teachers and a Cluny Associate, 27 students and 30 parents from our St. Mary School. We were welcomed to Taumeasina Island in Samoa with the blowing of cone shells, beating of drums and garlanding of tropical flowers.

We experienced the culture and traditions of Samoa and visited two schools and a support center. At a coconut and kakaoa (cocoa) plantation we learned how to roast and pound the kakaoa the old way. We visited a Samoan fale (home) and learned how Samoans prepare and cook their food in a traditional way. In the evening we enjoyed a cultural evening, the Samoan Siva Night.

Our visits took us to The Samoa Victim Support Development Center for children who have suffered sexual abuse, St. Mary Primary School for Girls, and the Marist Primary School for Boys.

At the Samoa Victim Support Development Center, it was a very emotional time listening to some of the children's stories. Many tears were shed when the children sang and danced to Amazing Grace, I'm Alive, and other songs. Afterwards we were invited to mingle with the children. Back on our bus, I asked everyone to spend a minute in silence to reflect back on our experience and the sad stories we had heard from the children. Mothers wiped tears from their eyes, as all sat in silence.

At St. Mary Primary School for Girls and the Marist Primary School for Boys we shared cultures, and dances, and visited the classrooms. It was a very good experience for both our pupils and theirs. We brought

sports gear and other donations. The highlight of this visit was to see the faces of students, staff and parents when they received their new rugby uniforms as rugby is the favorite sport in the islands.

This journey has brought joy. We received the call, we reached out and we shared. I felt that the being part of this *malaga* (mission) trip to Samoa was fulfilling our Provincial Chapter proposal which states "Finding ways of reaching out to remote mission communities...." (Chapter Proposals, New Evangelization, The Provincial Chapter Encourages. #2)

Faieksia 'e hanisi. (Thank you very much.)



Sister Emeli and Samoan children.



New Zealanders pounding the kakaoa.