



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [News](#) - Online journal: India Service Project

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2010.2.9

A group of young Australians and New Zealanders are taking part in the *India Service Project in New Delhi*, from January – February 2010. In the blog <http://indiaserviceproject2010.blogspot.com> they recount their daily adventures with beautiful pictures and a good dose of humour. Below is a sample...

The project has been organised by Fernhall Study Centre in New Zealand, which offers personal development for women of all ages and creeds. Their aim is to help women achieve their full potential so that they can enrich society and help make it more human. Activities of a spiritual nature are entrusted to Opus Dei, a personal prelature of the Catholic Church, which helps people find holiness in everyday life.

Inspired by the Christian ideals of service encouraged by St Josemaria, Fernhall organises a number of community development projects both in New Zealand and overseas.

“I myself measure the sincerity of concern for others in terms of works of service, and I know of thousands of cases of students in many countries who have refused to build their own little private worlds. They are giving themselves to others through their professional work, which they try to carry out with human perfection, through educational endeavours, through social and welfare activities, in a spirit of youth and cheerfulness”. *St Josemaria, Conversations, 75*

From the blog...

First Day - Namaste!

We started the day in style with a four-course breakfast on the house's front lawn. After this promising start we got ready to hit the markets in search of materials for our craft activities at Cheshire Home for the disabled and Kamalini Vocational School. Once in our big white tourist vans however, we found things to be slightly different to inside our high-walled house. What we thought was early morning fog

did not clear to reveal blue skies. And the beeping that we thought was localised congestion seemed to continue as we moved between suburbs. Stopping at a traffic light we were startled to find a pair of horns greeting us at through the window - and this was just to be the first of many free-range cows throughout the city streets. After trying out our bargaining skills we walked out with our purchases and headed home for a lunch. . .

Day 2 - We couldn't help but feel uplifted by their cheerfulness

Day 2 started early, with 6:30am Mass at the convent down the road. It was held in a small chapel not really designed for 27 odd people and so the majority of us took our seats on the floor. Hearing a lot of noise on our way out, we sneaked a peek through an open doorway to find 18 kids waiting for breakfast. Talking to the nuns we found it was an orphanage for mentally handicapped children, most of whom had either been left at their door or found and brought in by the police. They were so excited to see us, holding out their hands to grasp ours and telling us their names in Hindi. We spent quite a while with them, and walking back to the house afterwards we couldn't help but feel uplifted by their cheerfulness.

Following the breakfast, the group split up to visit the various places that we would be working in. Some went to the Cheshire Home for the disabled, others went shopping for craft activities, and the rest of us went to see one of the Deepalaya schools where we'd be teaching. This particular school had 500 kids from the surrounding slum area, ranging in age from 4 to 16 years. As we walked into each classroom we were greeted with an enthusiastic "Good morning ma'am!" from kids in their clean maroon jumpers.

We headed to Deepalaya Headquarters after this - for a video and short talk about the history and purpose of the organisation - before hitting the road again to teach at Kamalini Vocational School at Sharpur Jat, a different branch to the one we had visited the previous day. Some of us taught a computer class that we had prepared earlier, focusing on revision of basic applications and advanced Microsoft Excel. We started with 3 young women but had 6 students by the end, who gained a lot from the lesson despite their lack of English.

Day 3 - Various destinations

Departure at 8am to our various destinations. One busload headed into the slum area of Okhla to visit one of the branches of Deepalaya School. We found ourselves welcomed/shoved into of a class of expectant faces, and asked what we were going to be teaching them. We started with introductions, then tried a couple of games, but language proved to be a significant barrier. It was

challenging, and definitely an incentive to prepare well for our future classes, but we left a roomful of smiling faces so it wasn't all bad!

The second group made their way to Education on Wheels, also a Deepalaya School programme. This basically consisted of a bus that had been turned into a classroom to reach the kids living in slum areas who can't make it to school any other way. . .

Group 3 went back to Cheshire Home for the Disabled to continue their physio and craft work. They told us many stories over dinner that night, such as about two brothers with good minds but who are constrained by Muscular Dystrophy, and an 8-year old who was the size of a 1-year old child. Their stories all seemed to convey the sense that their work had brought a ray of sunshine to the patients' day.

Day 4 - starting to get used to the routine

The Deepalaya School group continued with their classes, some at the small Ohkla school, the others at the larger school 10 minutes away (this school building won an architectural award for clever use of space in a limited area). The girls at Education on Wheels continued as well, surprised to learn that their kids remembered the songs from the day before. The other group returned to Cheshire, finding the residents very efficient in their craft work and generally connecting with them. . .

Continue reading the full blog at: <http://indiaserviceproject2010.blogspot.com>