

JON PATEL

Please bear with me on this reflection.

I cannot express my gratitude enough for the warmest, loving community I have ever seen. When we first arrived at the airport in shambles from our bad luck (delayed flights, lost luggage), we were greeted by a happy welcome from Mani, Kumar, and Sylvester. They were eager to help us, and they were so kind. This same energy was amplified when we arrived at St. Mary clinic in the evening. We felt so bad for having to come late in the evening when we realized that the college students and medical staff from St. Mary's hospital were waiting for us. This welcoming celebration is something that each of us will carry for the rest of our lives.

I can tell that looking around everyone truly cares for each other. When we visited the local church during their Sunday service, we again witnessed the same energy that resonated in this community.

The following day the first medical camp was taking place. I was amazed by how many sick patients were flooding in. We had a tour around the medical camp and saw the triage, vitals area, and doctors working hard to help their patients. We analyzed the old charts and noticed the wide variety of complaints. The saddest encounter that has not left my mind was when Leenus was translating a poor women's pain and depression. The patient had no desire to live due to the pain. I had no words to say that could comfort her. Memories like these are the ones that are stored in prayer.

The next following days we have toured Pondicherry and Kanyakumari which were spectacular places. We visited a lot of temples and learned more about the culture in this area of India. We also saw the big temple in Rameswaram and went to the most eastward beach to Sri Lanka. We had a lot of fun and many memories were built in these places.

As we returned, we saw three more medical camps taking place. The staff, doctors, and other personnel were working very hard. The number of patients flooding in made documentation impossible to get a thorough HPI, ROS, and Phys exam. I was realizing the struggle for achieving healthcare for this poor community. Their opportunity to get good quality of treatment, especially chronic treatment, is very difficult. I do not want to forget to mention the wonderful celebration this medical camp had performed for us and other members.

One of the days we had visited the nursing home and I was truly stunned. I could not believe how one caretaker was able to help all these sick people. She took

care of the most severe foot wounds. She showed us images before and after her treatment on these severe foot ulcers. This is a true servant's heart. One that has god's eyes watching over her and this family. I recognize this is an immense sacrifice that I have not witnessed from many people. I was humbled to this.

I do not want to forget to mention how amazing it was to see orthopedic surgery at Scudder Memorial Hospital. The V-Y plasty procedures were very impressive to us to watch. We want to fully express our gratitude to the surgeon and the medical staff as well as of course Leenus for giving us a once in a lifetime experience. We loved it a lot.

Also, the leprosy clinic was a unique experience. Humbling to see this hospital. I can tell this organization and clinic has big plans. The story that touched my heart was the story of an engineer who contracted the deadly bacteria. His life turned upside down. He told us not to pursue our careers for money but instead help those in need. In perfect English I can recall this memory.

Lastly, one of the most jaw dropping celebrations I have seen was the welcoming ceremony at St. Patrick's school. We could not believe it. I am going to be honest, my happiness peaked when I was at that school. Students filled with joy and immense potential. Teachers that cared and staff with big hearts. When we went to teach science to 10th graders, the students were jumping with joy. They knew their stuff and I glanced at their textbooks and knew that this information will help them exceed and excel. I am glad this organization puts a lot of effort into the school. Education is the key to a better life. I realized in this world you four things to achieve a dream: a support system, resources, education, and god. I noticed all these things existed here.

I want to express one more thanks to everyone we saw in this community. They were amazing and always kind. The next thanks I want to give is to Father Ben. I want to personally thank him for answering my call last December. I felt it was god's plan that he picked up the phone and took some precious time to educate me and tell me the experiences that the world's largest discriminated population must endure. His story was truly motivating.

I also want to mention John Boyle (one of my first friends at Baylor and one of the smartest people I know) and thank him for his effort on the electronic medical program. Another huge thanks to Vincent for helping us with all the struggles and miscommunication. Thank you again. Also, thanks to other directors at St. Mary and St. Patrick. It was an honor to meet you all.

All the biggest thanks are to Leenus. You helped us tremendously. I realized how much sacrifice this trip was for you. You lost precious time away from family and spent precious resources and lots of time for making this trip utterly beautiful. You did the best job ever.

Furthermore, I will dedicate my time as well in the future if you need me. Last note. Sophomore year fall semester was a darker time for me. I was going through some stress and put a lot of energy into my classes when I realized this is not what was drawing me to live. What I live for is god, friends and family. I want to be surrounded by joy and want to see my community thriving. At the end of my December year I had accumulated some money from working at the ER and wanted to plan a trip. Do I want to spend this on a vacation or somewhere that is more needed? I felt something, I kid you not to realize and remember what my grandfather was telling me about Dalits in Gujarat. These stories are awful and something I hate because this community is ostracized. I want to leave my thoughts with this serenity prayer.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference. We can all make a difference in this world. I encourage other volunteers reading this and that are moved by this mission's purpose, to volunteer and help this organization in any way possible. We thank this organization Dalit Solidarity for everything.

Sincerely
Jon Patel



Dalit
Solidarity