

In the afternoon break we went with Father Philip to visit a branch of the school in Dhing. He showed us how the building work was progressing there and was pleased to report that a lot of the school could already be used. We were heartily welcomed by the pupils and the teachers who had even prepared some dances and singing especially for our reception. An ensuing discussion about Germany began with the question: "What about Hitler?", a question that startled us at first, but led to a lively question and answer session on our history and present-day situation.

The evening was rounded off with a church service celebrated by Bishop Michel Akasius Toppo from Tezpur and a big supper in the school yard with parents, students, teachers and other guests.

Friday was rehearsal day for the school pupils and we used the opportunity to visit the National Park in Kaziranga. We set off at 4.30 in the morning. Superintendent Gogoi had insisted on giving us a police escort as well as arranging for the Chief Ranger to show us round the park which is normally closed to visitors at this time of the year. We were very lucky to see elephants, deer and the Assam rhinoceros, the only one with one horn on its nose. We were also able to see the Brahmaputra. By this time we had six armed policemen with us to prevent any kidnapping....

On our return to Nagaon we watched some of the ongoing rehearsals and got a first impression of what the celebrations would be like on Saturday.

Saturday began with a mass which was celebrated by Father Piet, the General Vicar of the Salvatorians, and this was followed by the blessing of the most recent wing of the main school building. At eight o'clock we all ate some of the special celebratory cream cake – and then (!) we had breakfast. Father Piet had arrived with Father Lazarus, Father Provincial from Tansania. He accompanied us to Dhing for our second visit there. Once again the students had prepared a welcome for us and Father Lazarus told them about his home country and about Africa. What impressed us most in Dhing was the work that has been done there with children who have found a new home in a kind of boarding school. The reasons for the children being there are varied and range from them being orphans to their parents not having sufficient means to bring up the children themselves.

On our way back to Nagaon we had the opportunity of visiting an important Hindu temple at Bordowa. The friendliness of the Hindu priest – he gave us a present of pickled fruit – is an example of the possibility of different cultures and religions living peacefully next to one another.

The celebrations began at 3 p.m. The guests of honour were welcomed and then there was a prize-giving ceremony for pupils at the school. Many speeches were held and the founder of the school, Father Prakash, was particularly mentioned along with the other headmasters of the school up to now.

The fantastic performances of the pupils and the teachers began at 5 p.m. They showed us traditional and modern dances, music, theatre, fashion shows and many other things. The gates were finally closed at midnight when the last of the 5,000 visitors left the school grounds. Father Sebastian, Father Benny and all of their co-workers could look back on a perfect day.

After mass on Sunday we set off for Shillong with a group of Salvatorian nuns. However, it was hard to leave the students and the Fathers in Nagaon as we felt that a true friendship had started to grow in the short time that we were there. Although the journey was very long, it seemed short to us because of the relaxed atmosphere in the car, which was characterized by a lot of singing (not always in tune).