

MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS



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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

From Fr John



Dear Friend,

As we enter the Christmas season, we do so in a spirit of deep hope and gratitude. Around the world, children and families continue to face hardship—from conflict, displacement and poverty. Access to basic needs like food and shelter is more precarious given changes in global funding and access to education and medical services more difficult. We witness their courage, resilience and dreams and walk alongside them through your generous support.

This year has been particularly special as we celebrate our 80th anniversary, giving us the opportunity to reflect on the legacy of decades of solidarity.

In our newsletter, we share stories from the Global South. In South Sudan, Raphaela at Loyola Secondary School follows her passion for tailoring; Elizabeth at St. Peter Faber Primary School stays in school with dreams of becoming a doctor; and in Lebanon, Sara rebuilds her life with bookkeeping training, while Nadia finds warmth and confidence through the gift of a winter kit. These stories show how your gifts of kindness give hope, opportunity, and dignity.

We wish you every blessing during this Advent Season and Christmas. As we enter the New Year of 2026 may the light and peace of the Newborn Jesus accompany you and console you.

United in prayer and gratitude,

Fr John K Guiney SJ
Director, IJI

Cover photo: Five-year-old Sabur Theen Makkur smiles as she traces a sun in the dirt during art class at St. Teresa's Kindergarten in Rumbek, a Jesuit-run school nurturing 238 children with learning and daily nutrition through its school feeding program.

Raphaela – A tailor with Ambition!

There is an energy at Loyola Secondary School (LSS) in Wau, South Sudan you can feel the moment you step onto campus. Students are passionate and proud of their school. It has become a safe space for learning and creativity, buzzing with activity. With over 500 students, Loyola has become a beacon of hope for marginalised communities since its founding - the school motto, "Light to the nations," is fitting. It offers not only formal secondary education but also vocational training in masonry, tailoring, IT, mechanics and electric installation.

Raphaela is an inspiration to other students. Her smile is infectious. At just fifteen, getting ready for her final exams in Senior 4 (equivalent of our Junior Cert), she's mastered the skills to tailor her own clothes - which she is keen to showcase for you in this photo.

Tailoring is her favourite part of the school day.

"I love designing different things. The school gives us so many opportunities to show our talent. They like us to be courageous and always encourage us to do more things! Everything! All the ideas we have...they support us."

When she speaks about designing, her face lights up.

"I've liked designing since I was young. I like to design dresses, especially for girls. Not much design for boys" (laughing a little) "I like when I make a dress and when someone wears it - it looks nice! That's why I like it so much!"

"I want to be a very good designer. Not just to sew clothes and work the machine but to design. To draw it and become a very famous designer."



As we enter the Christmas season here in Ireland, Raphaella wants to share with you, how she intends to celebrate this Christmas with her family – her family will have chicken or goat for the Christmas dinner. At midnight, on Christmas Eve, **"we celebrate Jesus' birthday with a cake and candle at twelve o'clock. In the morning, we go to Church and pray. Here in South Sudan, you see, people - mostly children - they come and knock on the doors. They want sweets! Biscuits! And we distribute and share. That's how people get happy here!"**

Raphaella challenges us to replicate her generosity beyond our immediate families this Christmas, and extend that same warmth to our neighbours, those who live close by, and to our wider community. With reports of South Sudan on the brink of a new civil war, the Vice President under trial and house arrest, and aerial bombardment in some counties designated 'hostile' by the President, we still can hold onto the hope that Raphaella's generation gives us – a generation so determined to build a better and brighter future.

This Christmas, you can help more students like Raphaella. By giving the Gift of a Bowl of Porridge, you provide children at Loyola with the daily nourishment to chase their dreams.

This Christmas, Give a Gift That Changes Lives



Bowl of Porridge

Your gift provides a student at Loyola Secondary School in South Sudan with a daily bowl of porridge for one month—their most important meal of the day. This nourishment gives them the energy they need to thrive in school and flourish in the future.

€30



Elizabeth's Dream for her Village

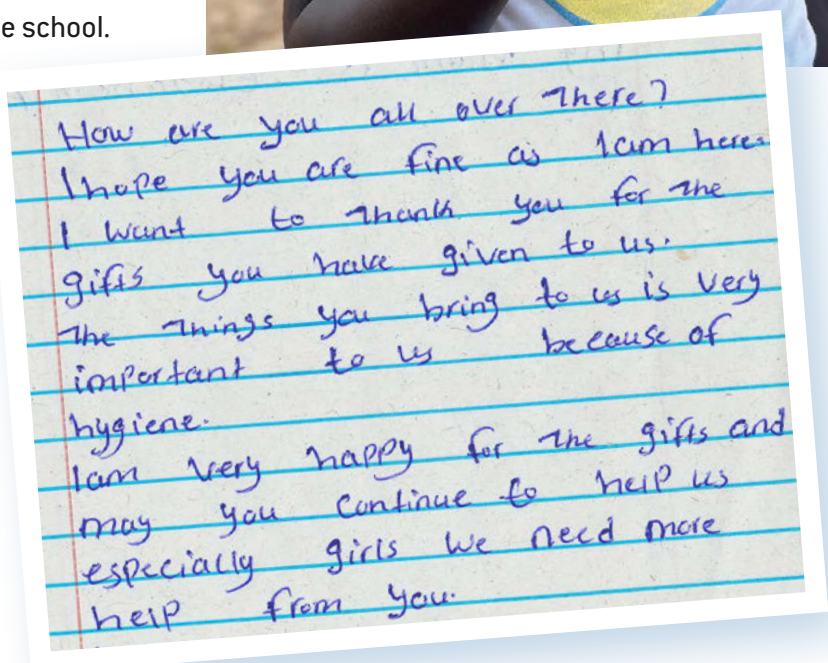
Elizabeth's life has been transformed – by you!

Elizabeth stands on the grounds of St Peter Faber Primary School in Akol Jal – a school that would not have been opened without your help and that of the Irish government through Irish Aid/Misean Cara. The school started off under a tree. Now, the foundations you see behind Elizabeth in her photo, will be for Primary 7 (which Elizabeth will join in January 2026) and Primary 8 classes.

Elizabeth is 17 years old and in Primary 6 – the equivalent of 4th class in Ireland when most children are around 10 years of age. The challenges she's gone through to reach this stage of primary have been tremendous. She lost her father at a young age, leaving her mother to raise five children alone through farming and cattle keeping. Elizabeth's two brothers left school to join the cattle camp so that she and her older brother Gabriel could continue their education. Gabriel now teaches at the school. Elizabeth strives to be a doctor - she wants to improve healthcare in her village, as families must walk long distances to Rumbek town for basic treatment and medicine.

Elizabeth writes this letter to thank you for the gift of a Hygiene Kit that she has been given to help her stay in school. It includes sanitary pads, soap and deodorant – ensuring she doesn't have to miss classes and can stay in school with dignity and confidence.

Elizabeth asks how you will be celebrating Christmas this year? She is keen to share her plans with you. Her brother Gabriel, a teacher, will save enough to buy a new outfit for each of them – this will be their only new outfit for the year. They will share cookies and chicken and will welcome their two brothers home from the cattle camp. Their two brothers will bring butter and milk. Together they celebrate



with gratitude, turning Christmas into a moment of reunion, love, and hope.

We thank you for making stories like Elizabeth's possible. Because of you, children in one of the most remote and disadvantaged parts of the world can dream of a brighter future for their community.

The Gift of Belonging

Nadia's mother thanks you for bringing warmth, confidence, and joy back into her daughter's life.

In the remote village of Basira al-Jard, on the outskirts of Tartous in Syria, eight-year-old Nadia has faced many challenges. Born with crossed eyes and poor eyesight, she struggled to see her schoolbooks clearly. This led to academic difficulties and made her the target of teasing and exclusion from other children. Her father collects plastic waste to support the family, and despite their hard work, life has never been easy.

Everything began to change when Nadia joined the educational program at the Jesuit Father Van Der Lugt Center. **Thanks to your gift of Winter Kits, Nadia was one of 365 children who received essential warm clothing last winter.** She received sturdy shoes, soft sweaters, a warm pair of pants, thick socks, a winter jacket, a hat, and a scarf — things she had never owned before.

"You have given our children what we could not provide," her mother said. "With these clothes, Nadia felt equal to her classmates and truly part of her community. Thank you for restoring her confidence."

The day she tried on her new sweater, Nadia's face lit up with a smile her parents had not seen in years.

She even asked her mother to braid her hair — a quiet gesture of pride and joy.

Now, Nadia walks to school each morning with steady steps and a new sense of belonging. Your kindness has not only kept her warm through the winter but has also rekindled her confidence and her hope for the future.

This winter, thousands more children in Syria are facing the cold without proper clothing. You can help keep them warm and safe.

Give the gift of a Winter Kit today — and bring warmth, comfort, and hope to a child like Nadia.



This Christmas, Give a Gift That Changes Lives



Winter Kit

After years of conflict and hardship, Syrian families continue to face bitter winters without essentials.

As temperatures fall below zero, children and the elderly are most at risk. Your gift will provide a warm winter jacket, hat, scarf, pants, shoes, T-shirt, and jumper, all purchased from local markets. This gift saves lives.



€45

The Gift of Resilience

Sara thanks you for the training she's gained as a Syrian refugee in Lebanon.

As a mother of two, who fled Syria, she's faced so many challenges, starting over in a new country. With your support, Sara enrolled in the administration, accounting, bookkeeping and sales course. At first, she was overwhelmed and anxious - using a computer for the first time frightened her.

She had always wanted to be a nurse but never got the opportunity. Now, at 38 years of age, she knows that when she graduates with her new skills, she can get a job as a medical secretary – keeping close to the medical world she had always longed to be part of.

Getting through the training has been tough – she has been juggling a cleaning job in a hospital, attending classes in the day and doing her Word and Excel assignments on her neighbour's computer in the evenings, once her children have had supper.

Her journey has also given her a voice. Sara hopes to shed light on the challenges children face in accessing education in Lebanon, where residency restrictions often prevent refugee and stateless families from enrolling their children in school. Without proper documentation, many children are left excluded from classrooms, making them more vulnerable to exploitation, including child labour. Sara believes strongly in raising awareness among parents about these dangers, so that children can



have the opportunities for education and growth that she herself was denied.

“After completing the training course, the dream that once felt impossible became possible. The course paved the way for me to build my own small business, something I once thought I could never achieve. Now, I have my own shop, and I look forward to continuing and growing.”

Sara's story is one of resilience, courage, and a relentless desire to grow. Despite the hardships she has faced, she continues to move forward—step by step—toward a better future for herself, her children, and her community.






**Sara asked that we change her name to protect her privacy*



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