

Our Week in Nairobi

We kick-started our week in Nairobi by travelling to Kangemi slums for Mass on Sunday morning. We never enjoyed an hour and a half so much in our lives. The Mass was said in Swahili but that didn't detract from the wonderful singing, clapping and drumming. The congregation was full of life and there was a great sense of community in the Church. After Mass, we headed to Loreto Convent, Msongari where we met the Irish nuns who live there. We listened to their stories about their lives in Kenya and they prepared us for what to expect during our two weeks in Africa.

On Sunday afternoon, eight of the girls set off for Kitui and the other eight of us went to the National Museum of Kenya where we received a very intense and enjoyable tour. We were surprised by some of the things we learned about the culture and customs of Kenya, many of which we would experience in the weeks to come.

We were woken by the unfamiliar sounds of Kenyan birds in the Mary Ward Centre on Monday morning. We all felt sick with nerves as we put on special uniforms to start off in St. Joseph's Primary School. St. Josephs is located in Kangemi beside the church we were in the day before. Most of the staff and students in St. Josephs live in Kangemi. The eight of us were divided between four classes with children ranging from 2 to 11 years old. We soon realised that there was no reason to have been nervous as the staff and children were so welcoming towards us. We quickly noticed the pencils, posters and art supplies which we had brought were going to be put to great use. The children were writing with pencils which were pared down to their ends and the teacher had no more to give them when they were finished. When we did Art with them, the children were blown away with the different colours and textures of the art supplies. They had not been given the opportunity to do Art before, so they loved what we were doing!

The morning breaks in St. Joseph's were the best part of the day. We played games, sang songs and formed close bonds with the children.

Every afternoon we had a different activity in Nairobi. These included visiting Nyumbani Home, an orphanage which facilitates children who are HIV positive, as well as giving respite care to children from the nearby slums, who are very malnourished. We also visited an elephant orphanage, a giraffe sanctuary, the Bomas dance show, the Kazuri Bead factory and the famous rooftop 'Masai Market'.

We had an unforgettable week in Nairobi. It was like no place we had experienced before. Every one of us is looking forward to returning to this wonderful city in the future.