

April 2021



HE IS RISEN! Easter is a joyous occasion at IREF. Many filled the seats specifically for the Gospel Message. Easter is a celebration of hope as Christ's mission to reconcile man back to God was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus; without the Resurrection, there is no hope in this world for Believers.

Excited to honor the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, students filled into the church. Songs of the Resurrection filled the church worshipping the Risen Savior. John Rebba gave the Easter sermon focusing on the experience of Mary Magdalene at the tomb of Jesus from John 20:1,11-16. Following the message, the Lord's Table allowed all in attendance to recognize the depth of Jesus' sacrifice and the love He has for each one of His own. The Lord showed up at this year's Easter service at IREF. Last year the IREF campus was empty, so we are extremely thankful for the gathering the IREF community had in celebrating the Resurrection of Christ Jesus.

What a joy it was this year to worship the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ!



IREF college students lead Easter praise and worship to celebrate our Risen Lord!



“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Every year on Palm Sunday, IREF gathers to commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Bible tells us the crowd with Jesus waves palm branches ahead of Him. At IREF the campus is full of shouts, flowers, smiles and decorated palm branches. This year is no different. The students sang a song based on Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 22:5 - “Behold, your King is coming oh daughter of Zion” from campus to church.

The students were led by the IREF choir as they marched through the side street, onto the main road and into church with branches in hand proclaiming Jesus had arrived; honoring Jesus as our King.

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YOU'RE INVITED TO IREF TOGETHER!

Last year, in the midst of a disappointing year for many, we took a bold step and launched the IREF Together virtual event. This year, on Saturday April 24th, viewers from across the globe will come together for an inspiring event called IREF Together! Our goal is to raise \$75,000 at the IREF together event. And this year feels particularly special because it marks, IREF's 50th year a registered non-profit in India. While the Rebba family has ministered in India for over 70 years, IREF-India was established fifty years ago in 1971.

During the event, we will look back at IREF's history and recognize the people that have helped make the organization what it is today. You will have the opportunity to hear miraculous stories of transformation from students, pastors, and volunteers who have made the long journey to India. Each and every person who has walked through this gate and onto IREF's campus has become a part of the beautiful legacy God has created and continues to create through this ministry. We believe that this online event will inspire and encourage you to be a conduit of hope. **Join us at IREFUSA.ORG on April 24th at 10am CST.**



IREF TOGETHER
VIRTUAL EVENT, APRIL 2021



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continued...

India Rural
Evangelical
Fellowship



Student Spotlight Siva Teja has been at IREF since 2018, now in 8th grade. His story is a harsh one that comes with struggle for a young kid. Siva Teja comes from an unstable family structure and the effects of that brokenness haunt Siva Teja each day - his father is an alcoholic; his step-mother hardly gives him notice; and he and his brother are left to fend for themselves at home. Without the care of his older brother, Siva Teja's story would look completely different.

Siva Teja's father's abusive behavior and alcoholism led to the abrupt abandonment of his brother and his mother at an early age. He then later remarried, bringing Siva Teja and his brother under their father's care again.

In this second marriage, Siva Teja's father's verbal and physical abuse, and alcoholism continued creating another volatile family environment. In the midst of an already weakened family structure, his father began to build a large amount of debt, effecting the family's efforts to merely survive the grip of poverty. This financial debt added to constant arguing and dissension between his father and step-mother. This led to Siva Teja's father to leave the family. It is only recently that his father returned with the promise of putting an end to his alcoholism and to straightening up his life. With the need to clear massive debt and have enough resources on a daily basis, his father's change seemed promising.

With poverty as the backdrop of their lives, during the lockdown Siva Teja and his older brother took it upon themselves to provide for their family. Earning roughly \$2.50 a day, Siva Teja worked at a license plate factory while his brother worked at a gas station. Even while working, he and his brother would be the ones to hold the house down in terms of cooking, cleaning and other household chores as their parents both went to work. Not earning enough money, some days they did not have enough to eat.

The lockdown was harsh for families in situations like these. Siva Teja's situation speaks to the hardship and living conditions of rural India and the impact COVID has had on families under the bondage of poverty.

"Some of the kids here at IREF come from homes where they do not get enough to eat - where they are not able to have three meals a day on a daily basis," said one of Siva Teja's classmates. This was evident in his appearance when he arrived back on to IREF's campus. So frail, it was hard to imagine how he had enough energy and strength to walk from one end of campus to the other.

Siva Teja's life is not easy - it comes with an extraordinary amount of hardship for an 8th grader - his dad continues to drink and be abusive; his step-mother shows partiality to her own children ignoring Siva Teja and his brother; they are still in massive debt; poverty is still the backdrop of his life; and the impact of his home defines his demeanor.

Yet, Siva Teja in the midst of all of his problems, he is happy to be back at IREF. Marred by abuse and the abandonment, Siva Teja reveals the joy in his heart in his being here at IREF. After the reopening of IREF's campus, IREF staff was able to reconnect with students to see how they felt about being back at IREF. Siva Teja replied with "I missed IREF during the lockdown. I am extremely happy to be at IREF again. I like being with my friends and playing and being in school and class. It is freeing here to be at IREF. I do not feel certain burdens here that I felt at home. I am overjoyed and happy to be back on campus."

We are glad to have the opportunity to care for Siva Teja. At IREF, he has safety, food, friends, shelter, clothing, joy and the love of Christ. Everything that his home cannot provide is provided here at IREF.

There are countless, voiceless stories like these at IREF - some are told some are untold. But this is why IREF is an oasis of hope no matter who walks through its gates. **Matthew 11:28** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (NIV)

Prayer & Praise

- We praise God for His grace upon IREF. Roughly 600 students have returned to school and everyone has remained healthy since schools opened back up in November. As more student return to campus each week, please keep IREF staff and students' health and safety in you prayers.
- Please continue praying for a movement that results in great unity among the global Christian community. Pray as IREF evangelists and Bible ladies concentrate their efforts on spreading the Good News in the new year.

