

SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2018
Issue No. 23

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"...love is all that matters. It is what compels us to move forward..."

Dear benefactors,

This past August, Fr. Michael and I visited Zambia and Malawi, where we were able to witness the fruits of the work of SCM because of your generous contributions for the poorest of the poor.

We were able to visit Thokozani, who I originally met in 2007; at the time, she was eight years old, the youngest daughter of eight children. Sr. Bernadette knew her mother who helped at St. Joseph's hospital in Ludzi, Malawi. At the time, her mother was gravely ill and feared for the future of her children. I promised her that I would find a way to send Thokozani to school. She succumbed to HIV AIDS about one month later and true to my word, SCM has supported her all these years. We are so happy to share that Thokozani has worked diligently at her studies, has graduated high school, and is starting nursing school this September! As a nurse, she will be able to give forward to her community many more times over. I can't express in words how proud and happy we are for her!



Thokozani with her mother back in 2007



Frankie and Thokozani in August, 2018

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

LETTING THE POOREST OF THE POOR KNOW THAT SOMEONE CARES

We were also able to visit Maria Mbewe, whose story brings joy to my heart! We have supported her for as many years as Thokozani but Maria is not academically inclined and struggled greatly with school. At one point, I worried that perhaps the money we sent could be better spent elsewhere, but I was wrong to think this. Maria is a responsible, hard-working and giving individual and Sr. Bernadette, believing in her, directed her to a tailoring school. It is here where Maria blossomed and gained the confidence she needed for success! She proudly showed us all the items she had sewn and we were amazed at her newly acquired skills! Her poor, struggling family were so happy they presented us with a chicken in thanksgiving for our support. I am always speechless at the generosity of the poor because despite great poverty, they did not hesitate to share what little they have. Every time I experience this kindness, I remember that love is all that matters. It is what compels us to move forward and it is always the answer to the suffering of humanity.

When I think of the many children we support around the world, sometimes I can't help but ask – how low can humanity get? How can these precious children so beloved of God, be so forgotten? I suppose with the recent abuse scandals in our church nothing should surprise us. The stories are numerous and heart-rending. Young mothers make desperate decisions due to illiteracy, lack of available health care, and no social support. One of the girls we support was thrown into a latrine when she was a newborn baby and left to die, until someone heard her cries. Another girl, a twin, was abandoned amidst the trees outside the village because her mother, suffering from mental illness, felt she couldn't care for two babies.

It is easy to become disheartened when considering all of the children we cannot reach. It makes me recall a conversation I had with Dr. Simone a few years ago. Sitting around the Simone table for lunch one day, I lamented over the fact that the charity wasn't growing as fast as I hoped it would. There is so much need but the resources never seem to be enough. His response was to tell me to look outside the window at the tall, oak tree in the front yard. He simply stated: "It took a long time for that tree to grow so big and strong." And so, a few years later, we are still a small charity but God has graced us with the knowledge that together we are truly making a difference in the lives of many children.

According to the World Health Organization, there is evidence demonstrating the link between education and health; a literate mother is health literate. If we educate girls, they are less likely to marry early and have children in their teens and they make better mothers. Helping our missionaries to provide the means for the poor to learn and become independent, has proven to be a successful way to make a change towards a more kind and just world. Our benefactors at SCM are able to look at the faces of these suffering children and see the heart of God. Your desire to see the children experience relief and joy has led you to respond with love! Thank you for your support for this mission and please don't stop helping us! As St. Mother Teresa says: "Together we can do great things"!

Peace,
frankie



Frankie & Maria Mbewe; Maria sewed the dress she is wearing.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S LETTER

"THERE IS A CRACK IN EVERYTHING GOD HAS MADE"

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

In our August mission trip to Africa, we stopped off at three different locations to offer a day of recollection to the SFO's in Chililabombwe, the Poor Clare Monastery in Lusaka, and the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa in Ludzi. The retreats were based on Pope Francis' latest exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* (Rejoice and be Glad), which offers a fresh "re-proposal" on living the call to holiness in our everyday lives.

To begin the reflection, I invited the sisters first to share what they thought holiness was. I asked them how they would explain holiness to a six-year-old boy.

They gave several beautiful responses including having a heart full of love, bringing our nothingness before God, depending completely on Him, accepting ourselves as we are, and even being a fool for God. One of the sisters however responded in a surprising way by saying, "I would take the child out into the bush." I was of course intrigued to see where she was going with this. She said she would then show the boy a tree and ask him how tall it was. After he offered a guess, she would explain the following to him. "What you can't see is that the tree is growing underground, where the roots are. Neither can you see how high it will be in the future. The two are related however. The deeper and stronger the roots, the higher the tree can grow. If your humility is rooted deeply enough, you can conquer even Satan." Her profound and insightful answer resonated with me in light of Pope Francis' definition of holiness in his exhortation as "an encounter between our weakness and the power of God's grace."



Sr. Bernadette, Fr. Michael, and Frankie, with Maria Mbewe



Sr. Lubingu, a Poor Clare Sister in Lusaka, Zambia

This reveals the very first step of holiness is opening ourselves up to receive God's grace through acknowledging and honestly admitting our own weakness and brokenness. In this way, holiness is not so much a struggle for perfection as it is a journey of humbly accepting our own poverty. In fact, the two errors the Pope identifies, Gnosticism and Pelagianism, are temptations which try to make us think we can "know it all" and "do it all" by ourselves. He points out these two heresies are rooted in our attachment to a distorted self-image and inflated ego, which imagine we can save ourselves through our own efforts.

As the Poor Clares' lives attest, embracing our own poverty not only frees us from a false sense of self sufficiency but invites us into a greater dependence and trust in God. Their vow of poverty, which prevents them from succumbing to the distractions of material attachments, places them in some way more in touch with their own incompleteness, insecurity and imperfections; all of which creates a place of greater dependence and trust in the love of God.

It is often only in experiencing the cracks and limitations of our own humanity, and the emptiness of our utter powerlessness that we can come to discover the paradoxical truth of St Paul's insight "It is when I am weak then I am strong" Jean Pierre Caussade went as far as saying we should "rejoice every time you discover a new imperfection".

Why? He explained:

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR'S LETTER cont.

"Holiness is humbly accepting our own poverty."

"The time will come when the sight of this wretchedness, which horrifies you now, will fill you with joy and keep you in a delightful peace. It is only when we have reached the "bottom of the abyss" of our nothingness and are firmly established there that we can "walk before God in justice and truth".....The fruit of grace must, for the moment, remain hidden, buried as it were in the abyss of your wretchedness underneath the most lively awareness of your weakness".

For in weakness, strength is discovered; in wretchedness joy; in the abyss of nothingness, the fruit of grace.



How else but through our failures, brokenness and woundedness can the Lord enter into us? In fact, God offers his mercy precisely to those who avow their defects to Him. It is those very cracks in our heart that we are often ashamed of and make us feel unlovable and so try to hide which are in fact what attracts Him to us in order that He may heal and transform us.

It is only after 26 years as a Franciscan (19 years of priesthood), and continuous failing in my own self-willed attempts to be perfect, that I am beginning to learn that my weakness, far from being an obstacle to growth in holiness, is a means toward that end. It is precisely in and through our wounds and brokenness, opened up to God, which He can enter into our lives.

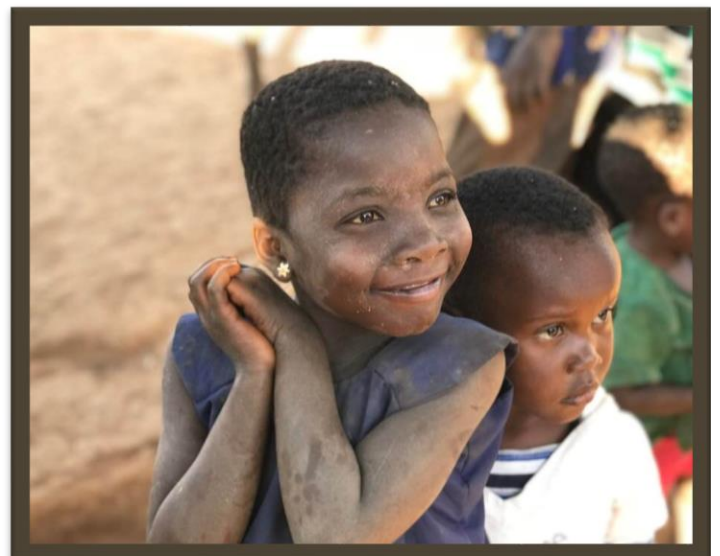


Gabriella, Fr. Michael, and Rafael - The Three Angels!

The first beatitude reminds us that the awareness of our need for God makes us more receptive to God's reign. More than His teaching however, Jesus' kenosis (self-emptying) is a lesson to each of us to embrace our own poverty. Rather than fall for the empty false promises of consumerism to fulfill us through a never-ending grab of goods, we are invited to trust and receive everything as a gift from God.

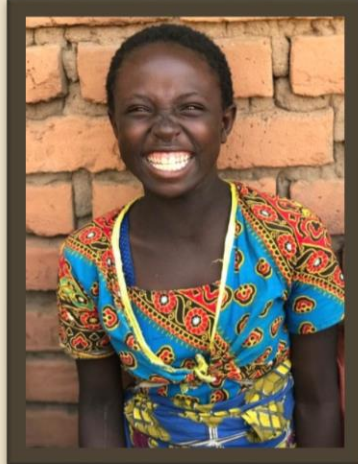
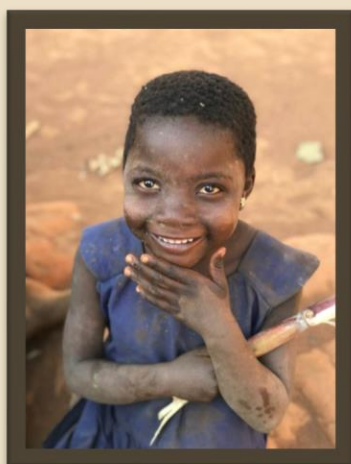
In some ways, the poor we encountered during our mission all seemed to reflect this same poverty of spirit which opens them to a trusting posture toward the Father. In this way, they witness to the truth that there is a deep joy that comes from a confident dependence on God.

Peace,
Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm



SCM IN MALAWI & ZAMBIA

THESE CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED BY
YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS



**"How can there be too many children? That is like saying
there are too many flowers." ~Saint Mother Teresa**



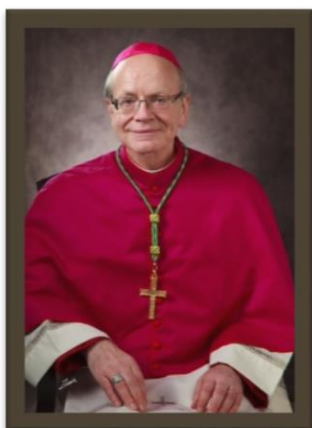
**Pope Francis' prayer intention for September 2018: "That young people
in Africa may have access to education and work in their own countries."**



(From L to R) SCM sponsored farm in Malawi continues to flourish; new well dug for Paul an orphan; SCM chicken farm. Just a few projects that are creating jobs and sustainable living for the poor communities in Malawi.



(From L to R) SCM sponsored program with the Poor Clares for poor children; Sr. Josephine at the preschool – she is grateful to our benefactor who contributed to its completion.



“**Silent Children’s Mission** is a devoted Canadian Catholic fundraising organization serving the needs of the poorest of the poor in various countries in the developing world. They are guided by the charism of St. Mother Teresa. Their funds are directed to lay missionaries, priests and religious men and women working at ground level developing services and programs in healthcare, education, food distribution, spiritual care and counselling. These are people who take seriously the call of the Gospel. I heartily endorse their ministry and encourage generous donations to Silent Children’s Mission to Christ’s beloved suffering people.”

Bishop Robert Kasun CSB
Auxiliary Bishop Toronto Central Region
Vicar for Lay Organizations

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **MAKE A DONATION:** By sending a *cheque* written to: **Silent Children’s Mission** and mail it to: RR#1 16060 Concession 8, Schomberg, Ontario, L0G 1T0, Canada (Make sure to include your mailing address for a tax receipt)
- **DONATE ONLINE:** via *Canada Helps* (SCM Registration #815949607RR0001) or send an *email money transfer* to silentchildrenca@yahoo.com
- **QUESTIONS?** Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com, or call us at 416-418-0314.
- **CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:** www.silentchildrensmission.com