



Boots (PPE – personal protective equipment) of health care workers who died of Ebola at St. Joseph's hospital

SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

NEWSLETTER

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Hand-washing station with diluted chlorine bleach and water found everywhere throughout Liberia – July 2015.

Dr. Simone's Letter

The Ebola epidemic in Liberia and West Africa has caused over 10,000 deaths. Infected people are taken out of their homes, which are then burned. Half of these people die and the others are sent “home” with a certificate of health to find no food, clothing or shelter. The rest of the population suffered as well. Fear swept through the country leading to food shipments being cut off, public transportation stopped, all local markets closed, and non-Ebola health issues were ignored.

In July 2015, at great risk, Father Michael Della Penna OFM and Frankie Burg-Feret visited Liberia. There they met with Archbishop Lewis Zeigler, and his priests and sisters to assess the damage. Canadian Food for Children will send ten emergency containers to help those suffering in the aftermath of this epidemic with much needed food, clothing, soap, blankets, etc. Silent Children's Mission will also help with those most affected. Please consider a financial contribution to help with this mission.

God bless you and Thank you!
Joan and Andrew Simone

Spiritual Director's Letter

“How beautiful are the feet of the messengers who announce the Good News.” Romans 10:15

The most poignant image that will be forever etched in my mind from our mission trip to Liberia is the photo on the cover of this newsletter. It is a stark reminder of the selfless sacrifice, and dedication of those who paid the ultimate price and laid down their lives to help their brothers and sisters during the Ebola crisis. It is a silent but visible tribute that shouts the Gospel truth: that there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your neighbour. The upside down boots which once held the “beautiful feet” of the caring medical workers announce this Good News in a radical and moving way. They tell a modern version of the story of the “good Shepherd” who was willing to die for his sheep.

I was told that prior to the Ebola outbreak, the faith based health institutions were overwhelmingly neglected and often overshadowed by the larger public hospitals and NGOs. That all changed when most of the secular run health clinics and hospitals closed their doors during the crisis. It was the faith based health professionals, especially the Catholic clinics and hospitals, who remained steadfast in accepting patients, risking their lives to help those in need.

It reminded me of the Biblical passage in the tenth chapter of John, where he contrasts the good shepherd and the hired hand.

“A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep and run away because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf seizes them and the hired hands are terror stricken and driven away. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't care about the sheep.”

John 10:12-13

What is the result? I was told there is a new found respect for the faith based clinics and hospitals by the people and the government

who witnessed firsthand the heroism, and unflinching courage of the healthcare givers in the face of personal risk; of those who chose to love others more than themselves. Among those who gave their life were the four missionary brothers from the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God who were stationed at St. Joseph's hospital. Their lives, completely dedicated to healing and hospitality, are a remarkable and compelling witness that evangelizes and changes hearts, because it is real faith in action, revealing a love that is Christ-like. This corporal work of mercy captures and proclaims the Good News in a way a preacher never could, it is an undeniable testament of faith that announces the presence of a higher love. The valiant acts of compassion of these medical workers witness to the truth of God's unconditional love in a way that no sermon can. This little makeshift monument behind the hospital serves as proof-positive for those who question the existence of such a love and demonstrates uncompromising faith in the words of the Gospel:

“The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again.”

John 10:17

Peace,

Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm



Fr. Michael and Fr. Samuel visiting the children in Liberia

Executive Director's Letter



Sr. Agnes and Frankie in Monrovia, Liberia

The Ebola crisis has had a severely adverse effect on the people of Liberia and other West African countries. Development, education, agriculture, and health care – all have suffered as expat contractors left the country, ports were restricted, airlines cancelled and all government run agencies closed. Liberia had experienced ten years of peace after many years of civil war and was making some progress – but the stigma of the Ebola crisis has set them back many years. Ebola is one of the world's most deadly viruses; it is highly contagious and can kill 50% of the people who contract it. I wonder how Canada would respond to a national state of emergency of this magnitude. And yet, despite their suffering, Fr. Michael and I experienced a warm, joyful and generous hospitality from everyone we met, especially our hosts.

Fr. Samuel had a full itinerary for us and we visited the people in the rural villages, city slums, orphanages, schools, clinics and hospitals. Visiting with the Ebola survivors was heartbreaking; the suffering was palpable and the grief in their eyes as they recounted their experiences was hard to take. At one point a young boy of perhaps eleven years, who had lost his mother and father (the village Imam) broke down and cried in my arms. As he sobbed, the chief of the village told him to be strong and to stop crying, and I whispered in his ear “cry all you want – it's okay to cry.”

The rain seemed to never stop in Monrovia, it rained throughout the day and torrentially at night so that it kept me awake and I wondered how the people living in the slums kept dry. One hot, humid day in the late afternoon, Sr. Agnes took us through the slums that lined the city of Monrovia's dump. She was fast and sure-footed as she jumped over the puddles and avoided the mud. It took all my energy to keep up as Fr. Samuel and Fr. Michael followed behind us. Clearly she had been there many times before and she was determined that we would meet a very special boy named “God Knows” – a young boy of about six or seven who was born with no fingers. As we passed home after home made of makeshift and broken materials we found God Knows with his family in a “home” facing the dump. That day, Sr. Agnes, just like Fr. Samuel and the other priests, showed us the poorest of the poor. I know that God brought us to our Catholic priests and sisters in Liberia to show us how desperately they need our help.

If you can help with a donation to Silent Children it would make such a difference. Our prayer is that children like God Knows and the Imam's son and so many others will feel the kind and merciful love of God through your generosity. Peace,
Frankie Burg-Feret



We found the children sleeping on the concrete floor at a home for abandoned and abused children. They didn't have enough food to feed the children but they were trying.



Fr. Philip Tickey, a diocesan priest, brought us to the slums of the West Point community in Monrovia where his small church, Our Lady Star of the Sea, was located. By the ocean we saw the public washrooms where excrement drained into the ocean and we witnessed the children playing in the water. The parents did not have the resources to pay the twenty dollars per month for school fees (85% unemployment rate).



We learned that rape is a serious social problem in the slums where the perpetrators rarely get caught. Posters hung on the hospital and clinic walls informing women of steps to take in the event of a rape.

The woman in the picture to the left is a member of the West Point community and was welcoming when we walked past her home. She was so happy when I asked her if I could take her picture as she washed her clothes in a bucket with a washboard. In every home we visited, we asked if we could see their food and in each home we found they did not have any. The people in Liberia live day-to-day trusting that God will provide for their needs.

“The Church has always reminded society that a positive future cannot be built on the impoverishment of man, on injustice, on the suffering of our brothers and sisters...those who work within the spirit of Catholic social ethics cannot remain indifferent to the fate of those who are without work, live in a state of increasing poverty, with no prospect of improvement for themselves or for their children’s future.”

Pope John Paul II

How You Can Help

- You can make a donation by sending a cheque written to: **Silent Children’s Mission** and mail it to: RR#1 16060 Concession 8, Schomberg, ON L0G 1T0 Canada (Make sure to include your mailing address for a tax receipt.)
- You can also donate online through **Canada Helps**.
- Question? Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com
- Look for us online at www.silentchildrensmission.com
- If you would like a speaker at your school/function about the work of SCM call: 416-418-0314