



SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2017

ISSUE NO. 16



Dear SCM benefactors,

As we reflect back on the past years of caring for the poor here at Silent Children's Mission we are moved by the generosity of others and so grateful for your support. Without your donations of love we would not be able to help the children who so desperately need the world's attention. It was a picture of a small, very ill child (above), that I took in Malawi many years ago, who inspired so many of us to action. Wrapped in rags her mother presented her to the sisters at St. Michael's Hospital in Guilleme, Malawi begging for their assistance. Suffering from malaria, malnutrition and dehydration, the sisters who are also nurses, gave her the care she needed to survive.

This child represents so many vulnerable children just like her in developing countries. SCM continues to help the poor in Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Liberia, Kenya, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, Nigeria, Mexico, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Philippines. Will you continue to help us?

On behalf of the board members of Silent Children's Mission and our founders Joan and Andrew Simone - may the peace and joy of Christmas be yours this season.

Frankie Burg-Feret RN MN
Executive Director

"Seeking the face of God in everything, everyone, all the time, and his hand in every happening; this is what it means to be contemplative in the heart of the world. Seeing and adoring the presence of Jesus, especially in the lowly appearance of bread, and in the distressing disguise of the poor."

Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Spiritual Director's Letter

Through the Perilous Fire

The Mbewes are a bright example of how we ought to welcome His Light into our hearts this Christmas. This poor African family, who had already taken in many orphans, decided to open their hearts and home to Charles, a very special little boy who was poor and neglected – even though they had nothing. Like the innkeeper who gave the stable to Mary and Joseph – they offered what little they had; a small shack, meager food and all their love. They are a powerful example of a model family whose luminous witness to receiving the True Light speaks of how we ought to respond to the central message of the Incarnation we celebrate on December 25th. We are called to open wide our hearts to all, especially the poor.

We met Charles in 2010 at St. Joseph's hospital in Ludzi Malawi where he was recovering. Charles' story is a sad and familiar one to many African families who have no source of heat during the winter nights, (which can drop to a mere seven degrees celcius). In order to warm themselves and their families, they often build fires just outside of their homes. One cold night, Charles went outside to play and be warmed by the fire and then accidentally fell into it.

Last Sunday's readings from Malachi remind us how we all at one time or another "go through the fire". "Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven, when all...will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire". While we all face this fire of certain trial, Charles tragically experienced this crucible of "going through the fire" literally when he was badly scorched with the flames at the age of four and severely burned.

His truly heroic courage and amazingly positive attitude inspired us all. He perfectly embodied Jesus' example of courage in facing adversity just before his crucifixion: "In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world." (Jn 16:33) Jesus' crucifixion on the cross is in fact the greatest sign of hope and the power of God's love to overcome any obstacle and transform it. The cross, a symbol of torture and shame, was forever transformed into a symbol of salvation through the power of God's healing love. This expresses the heart of the Gospel, the good news that with God we can overcome any adversity or tragedy. The advent wreath symbolizes the coming hope of The Light into the darkness of our world. The circle of the wreath, made of evergreen leaves that signify continuous life, without beginning or end are decorated with laurel, which signifies victory over persecution and suffering and point to the resurrection and new life offered by Christ through His passion. The prickly leaves of Holly remind us of the crown of thorns. Each week of Advent, we light another candle to represent the radiant growth of His living and eternal flame of love, to prepare our hearts to receive His healing light, especially in our dark places. Your generous donations to SCM have helped support the Mbewe family so that Charles, who is quite intelligent and shows potential, is now enrolled in the Ludzi boys school where he is thriving; a living witness to Malachi's final line in the first reading: "But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays."

Jesus never promised we would not go through storms or the fire but rather that he would faithfully remain always with us. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: "Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, his name will continue to resound throughout the world."

Peace,

Father Michael Della Penna ofm
Spiritual Director



Left: Charles in 2010 suffering from extensive burns at the age of four.

Right: Susanna Mbewe, Mrs Mbewe, **Charles** and Mr. Mbewe November 2016. Thanks to the generosity of SCM benefactors – the Mbewes care for Charles while he attends Ludzi Boy's School. If not for SCM assistance – this intelligent, young boy would not be attending school as the cost of school fees and uniforms are way beyond their means. SCM brings love and hope to these people!



Executive Director's Update



HAITI UPDATE - from our SCM board member Gerald Brinston who travels to Cerca Carvajal, Haiti four times per year:

Top left: Her mother left the young girl in this picture in the rural village of Cerca Carvajal. Many parents will leave their children in search of food or employment. Often the parents do not return and so the children start on a journey to the city in search of their parents. Most of them end up in Port Au Prince in a slum called Cite Soleil (see photo **above**) where even the police do not enter because it is too dangerous. This densely populated slum is 3 square miles and has about 200-300,000 people. Most are unemployed and the vast majority are children. In Haiti 65% of the people are under 25 years old.

In Cite Soleil – the largest slum in Haiti - the children live in extreme hunger and are exposed to gang violence, high risk for HIV/AIDS, no opportunity for an education, no sewer system and rat infestations. On average – nine people live in one shack (see picture **left**).

Their greatest needs are food, water, shelter and the need to feel safe and secure. Often the children will go two to three days without food. Hurricane Matthew left crops destroyed and the hunger situation will only get worse in the months to come. SCM supports a feeding program – and Gerry will be there to provide the children with a meal for Christmas.



CHILILABOMBWE, ZAMBIA UPDATE – from Sr. Josephine Mulenga, Franciscan Sister of Assisi:

Dear Frankie,

I hope all is well with you and your family members. I am desperately looking for help for these families (pictures attached). The situation is very bad at the moment in Chililabombwe. The number of children has increased at the Nutrition Centre and right now we do not have funding in order to buy more food for those living in shanty compounds.

Please – whatever is possible, we are going to appreciate very much.

Happy Advent Season

Love,

Sr. Josephine

Left: “This is Gilbert – he stays with his mom, just the two of them - he is severely malnourished and his family is unable to provide for him. As you can see his body is becoming thin.”



LIBERIA UPDATE - from Fr. Samuel Von Tucker - Spiritan priest in Monrovia, Liberia:

Fr. Samuel continues to send us updates and photos of the school construction in Monrovia. This school is called Catholic Queen of Peace School and will assist up to 300 children in his poor parish, especially orphans of the ebola virus, refugees and the physically challenged.

Despite the unfinished school structure – classes continue for the students in makeshift classrooms. Silent Children's Mission has sent money to assist with the building of the school – see previous newsletter for more information. All newsletters can be found on our website at: www.silentchildrensmisson.com

Left – A young student gathers water at the school water pump.



LIBERIA UPDATE – from Sr. Agnes Seckeh – a Sister of the Holy Family Congregation and representative of Silent Children Liberia.

Left: “A young boy named “God's Power” - date of birth, place of birth, name of mother or father – all unknown. He has developmental delays

It was on September 22, 2003 when Former President Charles Taylor, Republic of Liberia Security Unit commonly known as SOD were on their regular night patrol when they came across this child on a dump site on Johnson St. at the hour of 10pm. The child was brought to the juvenile section of the National Police. Attempts were made to reunite this child with his biological parents but to no avail. Mama Korvah has taken him in but she experiences tough times caring for him with his condition. Because of this Silent Children provides assistance.”



KASAMA ZAMBIA UPDATE – from Sr. Charity Chasimba – medical doctor in charge of St. Fidelis Hospital:

“Our hospital is still struggling with a number of challenges that need the assistance of stakeholders. The community still faces youth unemployment and high levels of poverty that makes it impossible for some youth to access quality education. We still remain committed to be part of Silent Children and share in her commitment to helping the poor and marginalized of our society. We commend Silent Children for their continual support to our communities and St. Fidelis Hospital that continues to benefit from the assistance received. May God shower you with his choicest blessings.”

Left: Feeding program for the poor St. Fedelis Hospital in Kasama supported by Silent Children's Mission.

Please join us in prayer on the 8th of every month – our intentions are for the poorest of the poor – especially the children SCM serves. Please pray for our upcoming medical mission to Guatemala this February 2017.

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 via **Canada Helps** or we gladly accept post-dated cheques or e-transfers.
- Question? Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com
- Look for us online at www.silentchildrensmisson.com
- If you would like a speaker at your school/function or have a question, call: 416-418-0314