

At the blessing of the newly purchased land in Malawi in 2012

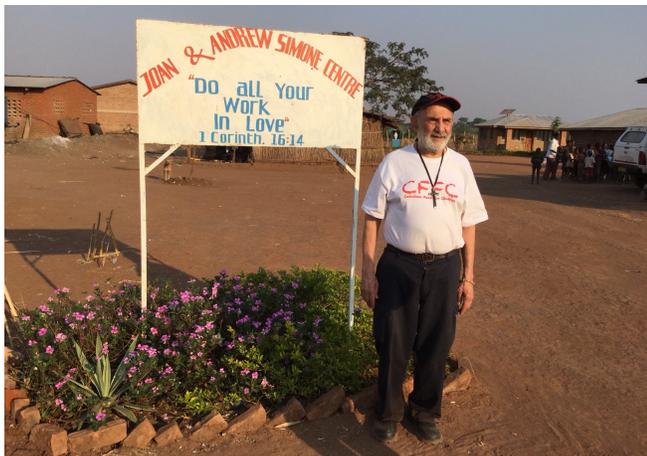


SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2018

ISSUE NO. 20



Christmas greetings to all our benefactors!

We are happy to share some photos (left) taken by Matthew Simone at a recent visit to Malawi with his father and our founder Dr. Andrew Simone. We are so happy that Dr. Simone has finally seen first-hand our successful farming project which has been supported by you, the benefactors of Silent Children's Mission!

The 72 acres in Mkanda, Malawi was purchased for the **Joan and Andrew Simone Centre** by a generous benefactor for ten thousand dollars and since then with the help of many SCM benefactors, the farm is flourishing! Sr. Bernadette Densani, Sister of Charity of Ottawa, has overseen the transformation of the dry, barren land (see photo above) into a working farm that includes acres of maize, vegetables, banana and mango trees, pigs, chickens and cows. This is an on-going project and our most recent addition was a maize grinder for the people living in the surrounding villages to use. The farm has provided jobs for local villagers and food for the neediest. Also, the farm has generated a profit through the small fees for use of the maize grinder and the sale of eggs and as a result, Sr. Bernadette is now able to provide assistance with school fees for some poor children. God is truly blessing this land!



Left: Oct 2017 – 5 years later Dr. Simone visits the farm in Malawi! The Joan and Andrew Simone Centre! 2000 chickens for the poor!

Spiritual Director's Letter

The Biggest Stars in the World

As a child, it was always exciting to see the opening credits appear at the beginning of every movie proudly displaying in big bold letters the names of my favourite actors who were starring in the film. Who wasn't fascinated by these breathtakingly beautiful and romantic movie stars of Hollywood who often seemed larger than life? Our favourite Hollywood idols lit up our imagination in a way almost nothing else does; making our hearts beat a little faster.

While all of these bright and shiny stars eventually seemed to fizzle and in some way, disappoint us over time, there is one star, however, which is the exception. This star is quite different and will never fade out. Although this star is the biggest of all stars in the world, He ironically has very few real fans and often goes unrecognized. Paradoxically, it is He who can be described as fanatic, as He constantly seeks each of US and deeply long to be the true star of OUR life. Who is this great and mysterious hidden star who is our biggest fan?

The last words of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a great Franciscan secular saint, before she died on Nov 16, 1231, were: "Then he created a new star, which had never shone before." As she looked at this new star, she passed away. This star of course was and is the true star of Christmas night, the real star of Bethlehem, the incarnate Son himself, Jesus Christ who identified himself by saying "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46). Jesus Christ is the one and only true eternal light of the world that not only shines celestial light into the darkness of history, but desires to illuminate the inner darkness of each heart. In this way, we too can shine and lead others to Christ, the only true star who was born, died and rose to free us and save us.

How do we do this? By being witnesses of faith. I have encountered so many of the poor whose hearts are like so many little lights, lighting up the path to God. Their heroic lives, entrusted to God's providence shine with a divine other worldly light that inspires and challenges. In his encyclical letter *Light of Faith*, Pope Francis warns us of what happens when we fail to follow this light and settle to be content with smaller lights that illumine the fleeting moment and yet prove incapable of showing the way. We become confused and eventually lost. "It is impossible to tell good from evil, or the road to our destination from other roads which take us in endless circles, going nowhere." He further explains that idols set ourselves at the centre of reality and make us worship that which is not meant to be worshipped. We lose the fundamental orientation which unifies our existence, and become lost in the multiplicity of our desire.

Our life-story disintegrates into a myriad of unconnected instants and we aimlessly pass from one lord to another. When we choose not to put our trust in God, we are condemned to hear the din of countless idols crying out: "Put your trust in me!"

Instead of seeing these beautiful people as gifts and icons that God has placed in our life that can communicate His love and point us to the True Star, we make them ends in themselves and thus place an unbearable burden on them to satisfy all the deepest longings of our heart; demanding something from them they can never give – ultimate fulfillment. Idols such as these are fantasies that not only deceive and disappoint, but steal and take away our freedom, causing us to serve them and be enslaved by them.

St. Augustine wrote that "Our hearts are restless till they rest in you Oh Lord" to remind us that it is only God and God alone, who can satisfy and fulfill all the deepest longings of our heart. It is only when we stop expecting these other false illusionary stars in our life to be "god" for us that we can be truly free to love others authentically as they really are, without demanding perfection of them.

Instead, we are called to go out and encounter the poor, not so much to evangelize them, but in seeing them as icons of Christ, to be evangelized by them. In this way, they will challenge and invite us, through faith, to reflect His light to others in order to show them the way. This is what I experience when I see the children of Malawi or the abused women in Liberia or the orphans in Haiti. I encounter people of true faith, which is the opposite of idolatry, that empowers us to break with idols in order to turn to the living God in a personal encounter. Pope Francis explains that believing means entrusting oneself to a merciful love and a willingness to let ourselves be constantly transformed and renewed by God's call. In this way, we discover "a sure path which liberates us from the dissolution imposed upon us by idols."

We must not hide the light of our faith under a bushel basket but rather, through our genuine witness, be unafraid to let it shine brilliantly before to all; to be a light which alone is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence, and so embrace our role in being a guiding star who helps others on their journey through time. In this way, we are invited to become like Mary, who is like the moon, which not having any light of its own, perfectly reflects the Son. We thus can become holy icons who star in the greatest role this world has to offer, pointing beyond ourselves to the Greatest and Biggest Star of them all, Jesus Christ, the Super Star who alone offers the satisfaction of fulfilling all our deepest longings and hope.

Peace,
Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm

Executive Director's Update

We recently celebrated the *First World Day of the Poor* on Sunday November 19, 2017 where Pope Francis at the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy invited all men and women to embrace the culture of encounter, and to openness and sharing with the poor through solidarity, fraternity, and concrete assistance.

In his message, he writes: "All the poor – as Blessed Paul VI loved to say – belong to the Church by "evangelical right" (*Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 29 September 1963*), and require of us a fundamental option on their behalf. Blessed, therefore, are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no "ifs" or "buts" or "maybes": they are hands that call down God's blessing upon their brothers and sisters."

We all feel overwhelmed when we think about the extent of poverty and other injustices in the world. However, I find great comfort and inspiration from our many benefactors who often write notes of encouragement, share insights and wisdom, and request prayers. I believe that the culture of encounter is alive and well here at SCM – with our missionaries and our benefactors! We are so grateful to all of you! We share some benefactor quotes:

Thank you for being our conduit to the children in need!

Thank you for the latest newsletter from Silent Children's Mission. Because of it please find enclosed a cheque in the amount of \$150.00 to be used for the feeding program in Haiti. The money was meant for a birthday gift for me (one was chosen in fact) but when I read about the starving/malnourished children, I knew the money needed to go there.

Some of my friends invited me to go with them on a bus trip – cost \$100.00. I thought I could put the hundred to a better use – so here it is! God bless and lots of love...

We were greatly touched by your last newsletter which we received yesterday and your article on the 100 or so children that live at MOC home in Haiti. Our cheque for \$2300.00 is to go in the entire amount to help the children. God bless you for all the work you do and providing us a way to help those most in need. Love and prayers...

God loves you and so do I. From the heart...

On November 5, 2017, SCM and many other lay organizations in the Archdiocese of Toronto gathered for a Lay Symposium with Bishop Kasun where he spoke about the spirituality of responsible stewardship that all Christians are called to. This philosophy of life or way of viewing the world recognizes that all things ultimately come from God and are gifts from God. By embracing this philosophy, we naturally desire to cultivate, nurture, expand and share all the gifts we have. Bishop Kasun suggests that we begin each day with a prayer of gratitude to God and reflect on how we can share our time, talents and treasures – perhaps this is a wonderful way to start this Advent season! On behalf of all the volunteers at SCM - may the peace, love and joy of Jesus be with you all during this Christmas season!

Peace,
frankie



Maize fields at the Joan and Andrew Simone Centre. Sr. Bernadette and Frankie holding the fruits of God's blessings!
(2016)



REPORT FROM SR. JOSEPHINE MULENGA (left) IN CHILILABOMBWE ZAMBIA:

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi have a long history of serving the poor in Zambia especially those most marginalized. It is their wish to complete building the Kakoso Nursery Project in Chililabombwe where the majority of the population are unemployed. Crime, prostitution, human trafficking, early marriages, and disease are the cruel realities that these people face. The goals of the project are to provide improved health for young children who are malnourished and at risk through day care and feeding programs. As well as to provide practical, moral and spiritual education for the mothers and children. Let us know if you are interested in supporting this project financially!



REPORT FROM SR. CHARITY CHISHIMBA IN KASAMA ZAMBIA:

“We would like to share with you about Gift who is a girl aged 8 who was repeatedly defiled by an uncle. He did not just defile the child but, infected her with sexually transmitted infections. This horrifying experience made Gift an intimidated, anti-social child always isolating herself from other children. Her strange behavior attracted our attention. We also noticed that she had difficulties in walking which compelled us to do a routine medical checkup on her which revealed that she was repeatedly defiled and infected with STI. We immediately put her on treatment. However, it was not very easy to get information from a community that is not used to reporting cases of defilement to the police. We moved in as a community of Sisters to report the case to the police. We managed to have the man arrested and be later charged for defilement. As we speak the man is behind bars serving a 12 year prison sentence for defilement. We have placed her in a safe and conducive environment, a home where she would be able to grow into a normal child. We have enrolled her in school and we are always monitoring her academic and psychological achievements. We are happy that she is slowly but steadily

re-integrating herself in the normal life of children of her age. Needless to say, this is just one case of the many cases of child defilement in our surrounding communities. We value this partnership that has existed for years now. Seeing a child smile again is at the core of our mission. Thus, we will remain indebted to Silent Children for their unwavering support to help the vulnerable children. We commend Silent Children for their gesture of love to our communities and St. Fidelis Hospital as an institution. May God bless your noble work of Love.”

“Love is a one-way street. It always moves away from self in the direction of the other. Love is the ultimate gift of our selves to others. When we stop giving we stop loving, when we stop loving we stop growing, and unless we grow we will never attain personal fulfillment; we will never open out to receive the life of God. It is through love we encounter God.” Mother Teresa, *Where There is Love, There is God* p. 26

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 Include your mailing address for a tax receipt (SCM Registration # 815949607RR0001)
- You can donate online via Helps Canada or we gladly accept **post-dated cheques or e-transfers.**
- Question? Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com
- Look for us online at www.silentchildrensmmission.com
- If you would like a speaker call Frankie Burg-Feret at: 416-418-0314