



Sr. Mary Frieda in Ghana

# SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

## NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2015

ISSUE NO. 10

### Dr. Simone's Letter



Vicky in Malawi – her parents are both victims of AIDS.

*"Everything a baptized person does every day should be directly or indirectly related to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy." Dorothy Day*

Dear SCM benefactors,

At our last SCM annual meeting, we decided as a board to fast together on the 8<sup>th</sup> of every month for the children who have no voice. The following is what Pope Francis has to say about fasting:

*"Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.*

*Fasting makes sense if it questions our security, and if it also leads to some benefit for others, if it helps us to cultivate the style of the Good Samaritan, who bends down to his brother in need and takes care of him.*

*Fasting involves choosing a sober lifestyle; a way of life that does not waste, a way of life that does not "discard" or "throw away". Fasting helps us to attune our hearts to the essential and to sharing. It is a sign of awareness and responsibility in the face of injustice, abuse, especially to the poor and the little ones, and it is a sign of the trust we place in God and in his providence."*

You are invited to join us in fasting for the poorest of the poor.

God bless,

Andrew A. Simone MD

## Spiritual Director's Letter

### Breaking Our Fast From Fasting



There are many seemingly good reasons not to fast from food, not the least of which is the fact that it is difficult. And throughout my studies, I never read a credible theology that convincingly explained how refraining from eating chocolate or any other food could get me closer to God. On the contrary, the history of spirituality contained examples of how some good intentioned Christians and even saints mistakenly undertook some unorthodox penitential practices that were not only unhealthy but also excessive, like self-flagellation. I had therefore decided that my ordinary daily life offered more than enough penitential opportunities without searching for more. I need only embrace those crosses I encountered; after all didn't St. Francis himself, at the end of his life, repent of being too strict and hard on himself?

That was, however, until I meditated seriously on Isaiah's challenge of what true fasting is, found in chapter 58: 6-14, which reveals God's idea of fasting.

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”  
“If you do away...with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed.”

It is therefore fasting combined with almsgiving, namely, refraining from food and doing acts of charity and justice, which St. Augustine says forms the “two wings” which enable our prayer to reach God. Not only had I been trying to fly with one wing, but I had missed the deeper meaning of fasting, which Benedict XVI said “is directed to eating the “true food,” which is to do the Father's will (cf. Jn 4,34)” and so “allows Him to come and satisfy the deepest hunger that we experience in the depths of our being: the hunger and thirst for God.”

Fasting and almsgiving helps us get in touch with the true hunger of our hearts, our very real need to be fed with the super substantial daily bread of the Word of God that alone can satisfy and fulfill the deepest longings of our heart. For as John Henry Newman writes “They alone are truly able to enjoy this world who begin with the world unseen. They alone enjoy it, who have first abstained from it. They alone can truly feast who have first fasted; they alone are able to use the world who have learned not to abuse it; they alone inherit it, who take it as a shadow of the world to come, and who for that world to come relinquish it.” Isn't that the reason we fast an hour before Mass, so that we can feast on the Eucharist?

While I may have an excuse for not knowing that the Baltimore Catechism included prayer, fasting and penance, first, second and third respectively, in a list of the chief means by which we satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to sin, I asked myself how I had missed seeing that fasting was the number one form of penance mentioned in the Bible, (and in almost every single book of the Old Testament, which begins with a commandment, the very first commandment to fast from the fruit of the tree). This in no way is diminished in the New Testament but on the contrary is expected, as Jesus himself addresses *how* we should fast not *if* we should fast in Mt. 6:17. He also says we *will* fast when He, the bridegroom, will be taken away in Mk 2:20. But the clincher came when I read how Jesus explained to his disciples why they could not expel a certain type of demon in Mark 9:29: “But this kind [of demon] can be cast out in no other way except by prayer and fasting.” I realized then I needed to take a second look at fasting and try to see how both curbing my appetite and giving to the poor could help me experience the feast of graces Isaiah speaks of:

“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear. ....Then you will call, and the Lord will answer...he will satisfy your needs...and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.....then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to *feast* on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”

This double practice of fasting and almsgiving contains a very personal and social sacrificial dimension. This not only challenges us to give up or share our possessions, time, and food but also to deprive our very selves and let go of something interiorly, something of our very being. In the case of fasting from food, we literally offer up a part of our very “self” physically. This very concrete sacrificing and handing over of our “self” is a radical act of denial, which, in imitation of Christ, empties and cleanses us and thus purifies us spiritually. Few other practices allow us to experience this type of participation in the paschal mystery: the dying of self, of our own wills, our own desires, our own wants, etc., which leads to freedom and new life.

In a special way, fasting and almsgiving empties us in order to fill us, tears us down, in order to build us back up, makes of us a desert, in order that God can transform us into “well-watered gardens, like a spring whose waters never fail.” Fasting helps us rise above the selfish interests of our egos and so gain some objectivity from our sometimes blind, self-centeredness. It is an exercise in loosening the chains that enslave us to being dragged along by the pleasure principle, which seeks immediate gratification of our every desire. In this way, we allow the craving to satisfy the worldly desires of the “flesh” to die interiorly and “pass over” into new life; we make ourselves a tomb in order to become a temple in which the spirit may dwell. In purifying ourselves of malice and gossip through acts of mercy, we also expel judgment from our heart, and create a sacred space that then becomes *vacare deo* (vacant for God).

Why is this so vital today? Probably because we live at a time like no other in history, when a culture has been so overtaken with greed and the self-indulgence of consumerism, that we deprive ourselves of little or nothing. Fasting and almsgiving is an antidote to our unbridled gluttonous addictions that not only enable us to confront our own limitations, but at the same time, helps us experience the limitless God.

We at Silent Children’s Mission therefore pray that you join us in fasting and almsgiving. Sacrifice must hurt, so we do not grow complacent into being in solidarity with the poor but also so that we die a little to ourselves, and are purified and renewed, in order to love God and our neighbour in a greater way.

Peace,  
Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm



One of our SCM board members, Gerry and his wife Kyong just returned from a trip to Haiti where they found the typical flooding in Port au Prince at this time of year unchanged. People live in horrific conditions that we could not imagine. The child in the picture to the left is vulnerable to many possible threats: drowning, water and food contamination, mosquitoes and other water borne diseases particularly cholera which is an ongoing problem in Haiti.

In the photo to the right the children are collecting water to drink. Unlike Port au Prince – drought was a problem in Cerca Cavajal. This is their only source of drinking water.

In the photo below – the children were found standing at the side of the road with no clothing and no shoes. These children deserve to have their basic needs met – food, shelter, clothing and education. Will you help them?



### Prayer for Silent Children

Father in heaven, open our hearts to hear the distressing cry of your silent children in the world. Let us be lovingly attentive to their needs so that we might care for their souls.

In the name of your son Jesus we offer all we are for your sake, everything we do is for you. Jesus, you embraced poverty; show us how to satiate the thirst of your suffering ones.

Send Your Holy Spirit to fill us with your sanctifying grace that we may be united as one family.

O loving Mary our Mother, watch over your most vulnerable children and guide us. We ask a special blessing on those who share this work.

Amen



## Executive Director's Letter

Dear SCM benefactors,

In doing the work of Silent Children we recognize the important aspect of building relationships in order to develop sustainable, ongoing projects with our missionaries. We try hard to maintain a culturally sensitive approach and we believe that the people of each country lead the projects in which we are assisting, as they are most knowledgeable about their needs. It is our objective to serve, "to be of use, to help" the poorest of the poor. Therefore, it gave us great joy when we received an email last month from Sister Veronica, stating that two of the girls we have been assisting with school fees have been accepted at the University of Malawi in the agriculture development program! At the request of the Sisters of Charity we have been supporting these two girls and many others for many years. Clearly, our benefactors have enabled these girls to learn in order to give back to their community in a far greater way than we could hope for. I was recently in Washington at a conference on global health and the speakers affirmed that women and girls in developing countries are marginalized by illiteracy and poverty. Study after study shows that the most effective way to break this cycle is to assist girls and women to increase their level of education. In a landmark study by Gakidou et. al. (2010), researchers found that in developing countries, every additional year of education that a woman attained, resulted in a ten percent decrease in the mortality rate of children under five.



Marysiana and Joanna were our first two children to complete teacher's college in Malawi. They are presently working in rural villages where the shortage of teachers finds some classes with over 100 students and only a helper to assist the teacher. Here they stand outside of Kasungu Teacher's College feeling very happy and grateful for your help.

Silent Children's Mission will be visiting the poor in Monrovia Liberia in West Africa on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. We have been warmly welcomed by the Spiritans and look forward to meeting them and seeing the work they do for God's poor.

Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world; according to the United Nations most recent Human Development Report, the country ranks 175 out of 187 countries. Liberia has under four million people, the life expectancy is 60 years and 85% of the youth are unemployed. Unfortunately, the Ebola virus disease hit this small country very hard – of the three West African countries affected – Liberia had more deaths - 4806 people. Although Ebola-free since early May, the virus has left the country struggling to catch up and has left thousands of people grieving their losses. Liberia's food insecurity remains high; in a recent survey conducted by the World Health Organization, 75% said they are concerned about having enough food to eat.

Please keep all silent children and their families in your prayers and if possible, join us and many brothers and sisters in Guatemala, Zambia and Malawi who have committed to fasting with us. If you can, consider a donation to help us to help them.

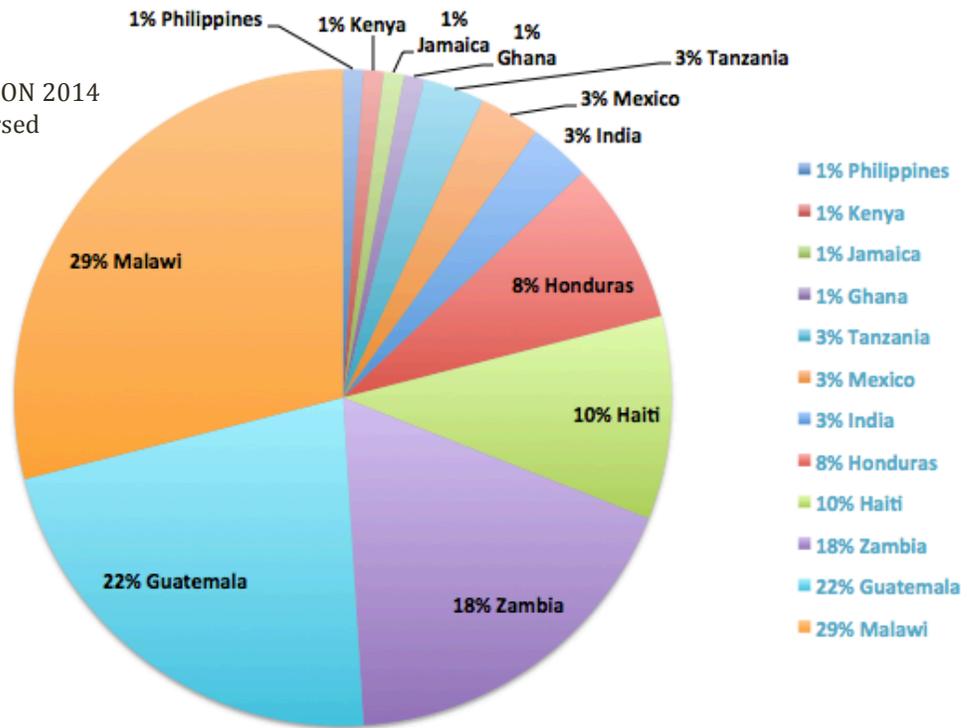
To all our benefactors who donate to this work, God bless you and thank you for your love!

Peace and all good,

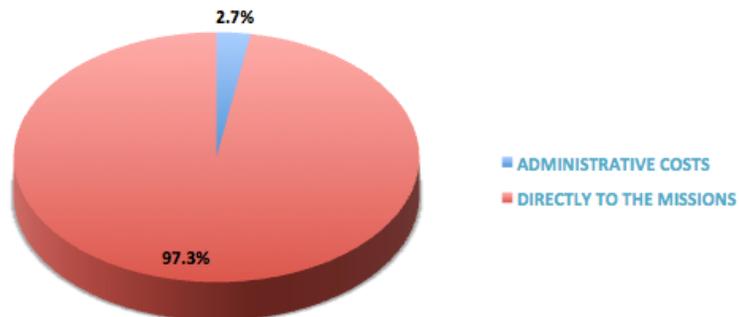
Frankie Burg-Feret RN MN

**“The mystery of the poor is this: That they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him.”**  
*Dorothy Day*

SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION 2014  
 Total Donations Dispersed



SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION 2014  
 Administration Costs  
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## How You Can Help

- You can make a donation by sending a cheque written to: **Silent Children's Mission** and mailed to: RR#1 16060 Concession 8, Schomberg, ON L0G 1T0 (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](mailto:silentchildrenca@yahoo.com)
- Look for us online at [www.silentchildrensmmission.com](http://www.silentchildrensmmission.com)
- If you would like Frankie to speak at your school/function about the poor and the work of SCM, call 416-418-0314.