

# Silent Children's Mission

This photo is taken in Haiti where your donations help support a food program



## Executive Director's Update

We had a fruitful mission trip to Rwanda this past August and as I reflect on our experiences I can't help to be grateful for God's hand in all of it. Last winter, I was praying about where our annual summer visit would be when we received a timely email from Sr. Cecile (a SCM missionary) warmly welcoming us to visit her congregation and to see the work they do with the poor. We were greeted and cared for by the Penitent Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in the usual amazing, Franciscan manner as we travelled from Kigali to Cyangugu to Kibeho and Butare. Their charism includes the "preferential option for the poor and desperate", and serving through education, health care, and nutrition centres.

As 2019 marked 25 years since the genocide, the tragedy was uppermost in our minds and the sisters and priests we met were open

to sharing. We learned that almost everyone we encountered had lost a family member or friend in the genocide. Sr. Edith, our translator for the week, lost four members of her immediate family and despite the pain, and with a generous heart, she brought us to the Genocide Memorial where over 200,000 victims were buried in a mass grave. Alexis Kagame, a Rwandan philosopher and Catholic priest said "udaturutse inyuma ye yagana he" which means no one can go ahead without coming from his background. That is, to *move forward* we must learn from our history and past experiences. While in Cyangugu, we were very fortunate to meet a holy priest, Fr. Niragire, who invited us to a reconciliation service led by Caritas Rwanda of which he is director. Fr. Michael shares this experience of conversion and forgiveness in his article. However, I must share that when I watched a godmother of one of the prisoners

*"The service of the poor is not a human enterprise whereby we seek to organize the world better, it is the place of a brotherly sharing, of a mutual creation through the power of the Spirit." Fr. Andre Cabes*

# “Lord, smile at us through the eyes of the poor.”

forgive him for killing her children, I doubted if I could be capable of such heroic compassion and forgiveness. I believe here in the West we are encouraged to hate people who commit such heinous crimes, but in Rwanda many are learning to have a deeper understanding of the powerful effect of God's forgiveness and how it can free both the oppressed and the oppressor thereby enabling a *movement forward* out of bitterness and anger. The ability of these priests and religious to communicate the mercy of God in a deep and profound way was inspiring and a tremendous responsibility.

*We were very impressed* with the work the sisters are doing and of particular interest to us was their homes for children with disabilities, many of whom were abandoned and unwanted – these were the children we were looking for! Sr. Scholastica, the director at the centre, provides inspiring work with very limited resources and with your help we would like to assist her. The World Health Organization (WHO), states that about 1.2 billion people in the world live in extreme poverty (less than one dollar per day). Despite advocating for health policies which prioritize the needs of poor people, most developing countries do not have the resources to implement them. The WHO promotes the pooling of aid funds and providing them directly to governments in an attempt to have a single health strategy with a framework for implementing activities and monitoring progress. I am not an expert in this area, but I do know from what I have witnessed and heard from our missionaries that aid does not often reach the poorest of the poor. Until that time when it does, SCM will continue to provide funds directly to the dedicated priests, nuns and laypeople in the countries we serve. Fr. Andre Cabes says, “The

service of the poor is not a human enterprise whereby we seek to organize the world better, it is the place of a brotherly sharing, of a mutual creation through the power of the Spirit.”

The Penitent Sisters' charism is for a preferential option for the poor – this is a calling not only for a few but for all of us, and an obligation for those of us who choose to follow Jesus. The extraordinary Synod of Bishops (1985) in its final report says: “Following the Second Vatican Council the church became more aware of its mission in the service of the poor, the oppressed, and the outcast. In this preferential option, which must not be understood as exclusive, the true spirit of the gospel shines forth. Jesus Christ declared the poor blessed (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20), and he himself wished to be poor for us (2 Cor. 8:9).”

Let us pray together: “O Mary, give us hearts that are attentive, humble and gentle that welcome with tenderness and compassion all the poor you send to us. Give us hearts full of mercy to love them, to serve them, end all discord and see in our suffering and broken brethren the presence of the risen Jesus. Lord, bless us with the hand of your poor. Lord, smile at us through the eyes of your poor. Lord, receive us one day into the happy company of the poor.”

Peace,

Frankie Burg-Feret





## Spiritual Director's Update

While in Rwanda, Frankie and I attended two special events on the feast of the Transfiguration. The first was a small, private meeting with twenty or so children with severe disabilities who were abandoned and now residing at the St. Francis of Assisi Center for the Handicapped in Cyanguu, along the border of the Congo. The second was a large public meeting between a number of prisoners serving life sentences for crimes during the genocide and members of the victim's family held at an open stadium in Rusuzi.

On reflecting upon both events in light of the feast of the transfiguration, a deeper spiritual significance seemed to emerge, specifically in terms of the conversation Moses and Elijah had with Jesus concerning His approaching exodus. The exodus offers each and every Christian a powerful paradigm for their faith journey. It is in fact a blueprint of the redeeming path of conversion we are all invited to walk, which leads us from bondage to freedom and therefore into an authentic encounter with the true and living God.

It is nothing less than following the way of love that Jesus revealed to us by embracing the exodus of His cross and entering into the paschal mystery.

In the first meeting at the St. Francis center, we encountered a 14 year old boy named Jioso, who was severely deformed and who had been found living alone in a forest. Like many children with his condition, Jioso had been abandoned by his parents; a sadly commonplace reality in many developing countries. Some families reject children like Jioso simply because of their physical appearance or because they are financially incapable of supporting them. Jioso's physical appearance can be challenging for some to look at, even causing some to reject him and deterring many from even visiting him. Ironically, however, it is Jioso's very appearance that can also serve as an invitation to encounter God. How? Meeting Jioso can be an opportunity to enter into a journey of exodus, that is, a chance to forget ourselves and to reach out in love and seek

the good of the other. This is the first and foremost movement of love, which by its very nature, "decenters" us and so triggers what Benedict XVI defines as: "an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God" Jioso thus offers each of us an opportunity to lose ourselves, and thus to find ourselves, for as Gaudium et Spes explained: "Man ...cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." (Gaudium et Spes 24)

*Jioso is a gift  
from heaven*

who invites anyone who meets him into conversion, challenging them to love, that is, to begin a journey of exodus, out of themselves; the same journey St Francis himself made. St. Francis, we are told, was disgusted at the mere sight of lepers, but experienced a profound conversion when one day he received the grace to overcome himself and thus embrace and even kiss one. Francis realized he had encountered Christ in the leper only after the leper left him. Francis turned around to find that the leper had disappeared.

According to another legend, Jesus even told St. Francis "If you want to know my will, you will have to hate and detest everything which till this moment you have loved and longed to make our own. And once you begin to do this, everything that previously seemed sweet and

Jioso was found abandoned in the forest. He cannot speak and is developmentally delayed.



and pleasant to you will become bitter and unbearable; and the things you once shuddered over will bring you great sweetness and you will be at peace”.

The second meeting we attended was a historic reconciliation service, only the second of its kind since the genocide, and took place after years of intensely cultivating forgiveness, through prayer and counseling.

These convicted murderers were first invited to share their story and admit their crime publicly and then asked for forgiveness with a member of the victims family they were paired up with. To say that for both parties, prisoners and the victim's family alike, this was a powerful moment of mercy would be an understatement. For all involved, it meant saying yes to the grace and call to love, an exodus out of the slavery of sin and thus a liberating movement of coming out of oneself. The freedom being offered the prisoners was not a liberty the world could ever grant but



the interior freedom of the spirit which can only come through healing mercy of love. The freedom to forgive the prisoners also allowed the family members to set their hearts free from the prison of unforgiveness. Jesus continuously leads us beyond ourselves, in order to free us from every enslavement, breaking down our sinful habits and our indifference, and offering the joy of communion with Him and with our brothers and sisters.

We concluded the trip with a visit to a new Franciscan parish which has a large impressive San Damiano cross hanging above the altar. We were told it was drawn by a gifted artist named Janvier who is in prison for crimes during the genocide. Out of the darkness, light.

Fr. Micheal Della Penna



*This little boy's name is Prince (left). He is 8 years old but the size of a 3-4 year old. He was abandoned at the centre and they are not able to locate his mother.*



Women taking her child to the malnutrition clinic in Cyangugu



Florence has CP - her father died in the genocide she lives at the home as she has no other family



Sister and brother benefiting from the sister's work of love at the nutrition clinic in Kigali

# Updates from our Missionaries



Clemencia in 2010  
Ludzi Malawi at the  
convent



Clemencia in 2019  
Nursing School

We at SCM are so happy to share that another one of our sponsored children has graduated from high school and has started her journey to being a nurse! Another beautiful testimony of our benefactor's generosity and how it is moving forward and blessing the community in Ludzi, Malawi!

FROM CLEMENCIA:

"Greeting from Malawi! I want to share with you something beautiful of my life and the joy I have. I have been taken into nursing and midwifery college to pursue a diploma. The course starts in April 2019 and is for three years. I am very happy and excited about it. I am so proud of the love and support you have been showing and giving me since I was in primary school. I am always thankful for without your fees assistance I could not have afford to reach this with my education. May God always remember you and bless you abundantly. You are ever in my mind and prayers. Your daughter, Clemencia"



"St. Theresa's Mission Hospital is the First Level Hospital, as such; it receives and manages all maternity cases of the catchment population of 17, 000 people. We receive clients from Rural Health Centres and health posts. The average admission per day of women in labour is ten and and 140 on average per month.

The hospital could not manage to procure a suction machine to be used on the newly born infants and children's ward for a long time due to limited resources. This situation impacted more on the infants who were subjected to manual suctioning which at time is not very effective. Sadly, we have lost many infants especially those who are heavily asphyxiated.

Thanks to your support; we managed to purchase this much needed equipment. Other medical equipment which we bought from the funds you sent include a bed for the maternity ward and oxygen for the children's ward which has reduced referrals. The midwives are very thankful to you for securing funds to purchase the delivery bed and suctioning machine. This is good news for the mothers and the staff.

We are so thankful for your gesture and only wishing you the almighty God's abundant blessings."

Sr. Annie Chiluba  
Administrator, St. Theresa Mission Hospital in Ibenga, Zambia



"Mercy Banda is a girl aged 12, she stays with her grandmother in Flaulo village (Zambia), and both of her parents died of HIV/AIDS, while she was still at a very tender age of which she cannot even remember how they looked like. Mercy is HIV positive; she contacted it when she was given birth from her mother. It was a challenge for her as she had to learn the consequences of not taking the drugs as well as the advantage of taking them. Mercy used to be in and out of the hospital continuously, as she was having very less food supplements to sustain her body. Misery was part of her life as her grandmother was only doing a small business of which she could not even afford to take her to school.

But though the support of SCM, Mercy is now happily going to school. She is now being supplied with enough food supplements for her health and this has enabled her not to be in and out of the hospital continuously. I am happy to mention that, Mercy Banda is aware that there are people who love her and that she is also important in the society."

Sr. Cecilia Tembo in Lusaka Zambia



Joe Nike making friends at Cerca Carvajal on the farm enjoying his new home where he is loved and cared for.



Thank you to our benefactor who provided the beautiful rosaries from Medjugorje. It brought huge smiles to all



Child at the malnutrition clinic in Cyangugu

## 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](mailto:silentchildrenca@yahoo.com)

**QUESTIONS?** Write to us at [silentchildrenca@yahoo.com](mailto:silentchildrenca@yahoo.com) or call us at 416-418-0314

**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:** [www.silentchildrensmission.com](http://www.silentchildrensmission.com) ,

**Share our mission with friends and family, spread the good news of the works being done at SCM!**