



Valle de Los Angeles in
Guatemala – helping the
children develop their souls

SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019

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Tanya in Haiti – assisted by SCM benefactors

Dear SCM benefactors,

Silent Children's Mission has been busy working hard with your precious donations and during our Annual General Meeting we all prayed for you in thanksgiving for your generosity and prayers. We are so grateful to you and appreciate your words of encouragement! Here are some comments we received from you since our last newsletter:

Thank you for sharing the love and mercy of Christ with His "silent lambs".

Keep up your excellent life-giving work. Yours in Christ...

Thank you for providing a charity I know I can trust. Thank you for making a channel for God's will to be done.

Thank you for the soulful and enlightening newsletter. I have had ill health for years and am so happy you can be there for me and for the children and families! Remember always you are the hands and feet for me and others who cannot do the things you do...

I loved the story of the starfish. There is so much need in the world that you think, what can I do with such a small offering? But as with the starfish, if only I can help that one! My prayers are with your wonderful work! May our heavenly Father bless all the children and may He also bless your work in helping others!

(continued on next page...)



This May I had the great privilege of travelling to Guatemala to help train a nurse to care for the 210 children at Valle de Los Angeles (photo - with Mirna to my left). Thanks to the generous benefactors who have provided directed donations, we can pay her salary for the next two years. Having a nurse at Valle will greatly improve the health and health knowledge of the children. If you are interested in funding one of our many projects, please reach out to me as I would be happy to discuss this with you!

As I write this, Gerry, one of our board members, has just left for Haiti despite the increasing unrest yet again. As you may know, Haiti is a country plagued with natural disasters, lack of sanitation, food insecurity and a 15% inflation rate. The departure of the UN peacekeeping forces and frequent city lockdowns resulting in decreased availability of fuel and basic supplies, have left Haiti in a humanitarian crisis. Anti-corruption protesters are burning tires, blocking roads, and destroying businesses. Chatting over tea, Gerry shared some of his experiences of helping the poor in Haiti since the earthquake ten years ago. One of his most disturbing memories happened just recently when he was caught at a roadblock and had to go around the

town of Hinche to try and access supplies. He passed the dump by the river where the hope is that the water will carry the garbage away during rainy season. It was here he saw the common sight of children scavenging through the garbage and mud looking for something to eat. This time however, the scene was particularly upsetting; just as the children got excited over finding something, the pigs sensed the possible meal and came running towards them. They tried to fight off the pigs with sticks but unfortunately were overpowered and ran. Gerry asked the question, "What has this world come to when children and pigs battle over scraps of food buried in mud?"

But there is hope, Mother Teresa, our beloved saint who inspired the work of our founders and this charity says: *"The Good News is that God still loves the world through you. You are God's Good News. You are God's love in action. Each time anyone comes in contact with you, they must become different and better people because of having met you. We must radiate God's love."*

One child at a time my friends – one at a time.

Peace and love,

Frankie Burg-Feret ofs

Spiritual Director's Letter

An Unencumbered Heart

The Hidden Treasure of the Poor

The word "unencumbered" is perhaps one of the most enlightening adjectives I can think of to describe the hearts of both St Francis and St Clare. The dictionary defines unencumbered in the following way: not burdened, impeded, slowed down, retarded or weighed down; free to move, advance, or go forward. But my favorite is Cambridge dictionary's definition that states: "without something making it difficult for you to do something". St. Francis and St. Clare intuited the best means of doing "the something" they wanted to do, namely becoming true disciples of Jesus and being set free to love God, was through imitation of Christ's kenosis, a Greek word meaning self-emptying, self-giving. Both saints sought to imitate the kenosis of Christ's incarnation and therefore radically divest themselves of themselves through self-denial. Embracing this movement of the poverty of God, who became poor so that we might be rich, led them to a detachment from material goods but more importantly,



Fr. Michael at Valle de Los Angeles in Guatemala

enabled them to be freed from their attachment to their own wills. St Clare even wrote a hymn to blessed, holy, and God-centered poverty, “who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her.” She continues by saying “God promises the kingdom of heaven and in fact offers glory and a blessed life to those who possess and desire you.” She then reveals why poverty is primary and foundational to our faith journey; because the Lord Jesus Christ...“condescended to embrace (poverty) before all else.” Poverty thus forms the very fabric and logic of Christianity, which reveals the Trinity as a dynamic and infinite out-pouring of love, as each person of the Trinity eternally and continuously empties themselves out, making themselves a perfect and total self-gift to each other.

St. Francis spontaneously stripped himself of all his clothing in front of the Bishop as a sign of his complete commitment to following the naked Christ. The confirmation of his vocation was grounded in the evangelical call to renounce all his possessions at the Porziuncula. It was there, where he would later ask to die naked, that a priest explained that Christ's disciples ought to deny themselves by selling what they had and giving it to the poor so that they would have treasure in heaven and then, taking nothing for their journey--neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, nor extra shirt, to take up their cross and follow Christ. St Francis responded by crying aloud, "This is what I wish, this is what I am seeking, this I desire with all my inmost heart to do." This spirit of disappropriation allows one to travel in faith as “pilgrims and strangers”

The wisdom of Meister Eckhart's insight that spirituality is more a process of subtraction than addition, can be clearly seen in the invitation to live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as three privileged means of following God. Each of these evangelical vows are meant to counteract sin which always has an “I” in the middle and therefore seeks to interiorly unencumber and free our selfish or self-centred hearts to love.

Francis embraced poverty as an antidote to concupiscence, the insatiable lust and greed for more, by warning his brothers in his second admonition to avoid appropriating to themselves their own will. This extended to never priding themselves on the goods that the Lord publishes and work in them. True poverty then is always accompanied by its sister humility which supports and accepts everything, as the ego or “I” is stripped of all desire for self-affirmation. In this way one can escape the temptation of pride in accumulating accomplishments for oneself. Francis chose chastity as a means of freely loving others with a pure and uncluttered heart that avoids possession, attachment, or the temptation to use the other for my

own good. Finally Francis knew obedience challenges us to deny the most precious gifts of God, our will and freedom and humbly surrender to Him, by listening for His voice and then lovingly doing His will rather than clinging to our own.

St. Paul expresses this liberating experience of emptying ourselves in order to be filled with Christ by stating “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). I have witnessed this in several ways with the poor, who, because they are not surrounded and therefore so often encumbered and distracted by material things, are more easily and perhaps by necessity, more able to concentrate and focus on people. Because they are unable to find security in money or transient material things, they naturally gravitate to and learn to depend on their relationships of love. They thus put their trust in the treasure of loving, personal relationships, which become the bed rock foundation and security of their lives. As a result, they are extraordinarily present to each other, and therefore present to God. I once heard someone say “The more we value things, the less we value ourselves and others.” In this way we see Ilia Delio, a Franciscan theologian's insight that “The poor person is not the one in need of material things but the one in need of God and the one who needs God possesses God and to possess God is to possess all”.

We at SCM are ever so grateful to all of you who care enough to help the poor. We are also aware that the poor, as Pope Francis continuously shows us, help evangelize us, by calling us out of ourselves, reminding us to love people and use things and never the other way around. We are profoundly aware that in our mission to alleviate the suffering and neglect of those who do not have a voice, allowing the poorest of the poor to know that someone cares for them and that God has not forgotten them, we are the first beneficiaries, who not only have the privilege of participating in such a noble service, but receive the grace of learning from them about how to unencumber our heart in order to make room for God and all people. Peace, Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm



Young boys at Valle pray to Mary



TANZANIA UPDATE: from Fr. Sospeter

“Greetings from Mwazye Parish. Kala village is located at the lake shore of Tanganyika. The main job here is fishing which is done using a very poor method and hence production is poor. The biggest challenges are poverty and illiteracy. Many people suffer with malaria, typhoid, bilharzia, cholera, dysentery, tuberculosis and leprosy. On behalf of the children I take this opportunity to say thank you very much for the financial support you are providing. Up to this time they are well, simply because the money given to them from you has been helping them in their lives with food, clothing and health care. We ask you to pass our greetings to the benefactors. Tell them that we love you all, and always we pray the Holy Spirit be with you, to accompany, support and help you in all you are doing. Together let us love each other because we are all created in accordance to God’s image.”

“Only in heaven will we see how much we owe to the poor for helping us to love God better because of them.” Mother Teresa



HAITI UPDATE: from Gerry Brinston in Cerca Carvajal

In this photo (left), the 13-year-old Misou is caring for her two younger siblings. The younger child has had her hair shaved because of an extensive fungal infection – common among children living in poverty. Misou was a restavek child, sent to work as slave labour in a rich household. Gerry worked hard to get her back to her home in Cerca.

JOE NIKE UPDATE: Many of you have asked about the progress of the boy who had been living on the streets in Haiti – his progress is incredible! Recently Joe Nike had surgery on his wrist which had a contracture due to the extensive damage caused by the electrical burns. Thanks to you – SCM benefactors – Joe Nike can now bend his wrist and hold objects! He is walking and learning to care for himself which is a miracle as many thought he would be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Thank you to the benefactors who sent donations directed for him – through Gerry, he feels your love.



UPDATE FROM GUATEMALA AGAPE OUTREACH:

Photo (upper left): Jandira (second from right) our Guatemalan SCM partner with Victoria and her “adopted” children.

Thanks to SCM benefactors the Carmelite sisters in San Andres Semetabaj, Solola are able to help support families in great need. One such family includes Victoria, a 45-year-old widow who makes tortillas and tamales for a living. She takes care of two grandchildren because their father left and the mother is chronically ill. She also cares for two nephews and one niece as the mother abandoned them five years ago. Pablo, her 16-year-old nephew has a dream to study but can't because he has to work to help with the family.

Photo (upper right): Teresita is well in her new home despite the tragic death of her daughter Nina. She is very happy and feels grateful to God and the beautiful volunteers in Guatemala who help her.

Please pray for our upcoming mission trip to visit the Penitent Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi whose apostolates include health and nutritional centres for the poor as well as a home for people with special needs in Karambi, Muganza and Kitabi Rwanda.

SCM ADMINISTRATION UPDATE:

For your information, we now have an iTrade account as a few benefactors have requested this in order to donate their shares. If you wish to donate in this way, please contact Frankie at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com and we will send you an iTrade form for donating your shares to the poor. Please note: inspired by our founders Joan and Andrew Simone, we will not hold onto your shares; they will be sold right away and given to the poor.

Other ways to donate include cheques and e-transfers (SCM pays no fees) and Canada Helps (they take a 3.75% fee). You are also welcome to send us post-dated cheques if that is convenient for you. Our administration costs are 3.8% (2018), this includes newsletters, postage and accountant fees.

Tax receipts are issued quarterly with the newsletters to save postage.

We do not pay for fund-raising, but will support fund-raising efforts through word of mouth, social media and this newsletter. We rely on Divine Providence through our benefactors to support the work of assisting the poorest of the poor. To read our mission statement and vision – please visit our website. We endeavour to provide the most we can to the poor on your behalf – no one at SCM receives payment for work and visits to the missions are self-funded.

Remember the children



FUND-RAISING DINNER FOR VALLE DE LOS ANGELES

Tino Minielli (a former Bachelor of Nursing student of Frankie) is organizing a fund-raising dinner with proceeds going to Fr. Michael's mission in Guatemala – Valle de Los Angeles. Please come and support this wonderful event and hear Frankie and Fr. Michael share about the mission in Guatemala and the resilience and joy of the people they meet.

Tickets are \$50.00 person - children under 10 free.

SCM will issue a tax receipt for \$20.00 (proceeds) per ticket upon request

Sunday August 11, 2019 at 3pm

Famee Furlane (Banquet Hall)

7065 Islington Ave. Woodbridge Ontario L4L 1V9.

Please contact Tino Minielli for tickets: 647-403-8063 or c.minielli@gmail.com

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
- **QUESTIONS?** Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com
or call us at 416-418-0314
- **CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:** www.silentchildrenmission.com