



Silent Children's Mission

ISSUE
45
SPRING
2024



"I had these kids this afternoon who came to eat mangoes in our garden, thereafter, they were playing at the Church - most of them are surviving on mangoes. I have invited them to come on Saturday for a meal: nsima and eggs."

Fr. Sylvester, Spiritan priest, Dedza, Malawi

"Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education..."

Pope Francis

Executive Director's Letter



Frankie in Moyuta, Guatemala 2024

Dear SCM friends,

I have received multiple messages from our missionaries over these past few months asking for prayers for relief from the cholera outbreak in Zambia, drought in Malawi, and gang violence in Haiti. Despite the suffering experienced by so many people in the world today, we know that Easter will soon be here and with that, the hope that only Jesus can give us. As an Easter people, you have answered the call to help those in need and you are making a difference in the lives of so many children and families. On behalf of the SCM board of directors - thank you!

This past February, I was able to visit some of the families SCM helps in Guatemala before the medical service team arrived. Spending time with Juan Carlos in zone 3 and Padre Joaquin in the red zone was the best part of the trip – it was here that I had the privilege of meeting beautiful souls living in the poorest of conditions and yet demonstrating the type of love found in the lives of our heroes and saints. I pray to have faith like theirs! By his actions, Padre Joaquin demonstrates a sincere love that

reflects the Gospel teaching of a preferential option for the poor. Our visit to Maria Ambrosia and her family to provide the Anointing of the Sick was an example of his dedication. Juan Carlos knows the families in zone 3 intimately and through them he has witnessed profound sadness and despair but also the joy and love in their eyes when he lets them know that their child will go to school, or they will eat this week, or they will get a new roof so the rain doesn't make them wet as they sleep. It is you, our benefactors, who are providing the school fees, uniforms, and supplies, the meals, the health care, and the house repairs. We are indebted to Juan Carlos, Padre Joaquin, and all our missionaries who dedicate their lives to the service of the poor and who allow us to participate in God's work.

Peace, Frankie Burg-Feret



Photo left:

Padre Joaquin and Maria Ambrosia during a home visit to provide spiritual care.

Guatemala



From Juan Carlos, Guatemala City Basurero

Prior to visiting with this family, Juan Carlos provided me with some background information:

"Micaela (pictured to the left) died tragically three months ago, leaving her four daughters (pictured to the far left) to be cared for by their sick grandmother. They don't have the support of the father as he abandoned them. Their abuela does not have a husband so they are all alone and have practically no income. She gets a bit of help from one of her sons."

"Frankie – they will have to meet us just outside of the basurero because they live in the middle of the area where the gang members are. They live in bad conditions. Most of the roof sheets in their home have holes. Imagine when it rains – and the worst part was that when it rained a lot, the water fell in the electrical sockets. Their main door was loose because the poles were old making them feel unsafe at night. The way the roof sheets are placed permits water to enter where their beds are. SCM provided the money to repair the roof and the door and the work was done by abuela's son. The front door is now fixed and there are new metal sheets at the front part of the house, new electrical wires were installed and a new roof was installed. SCM is also helping the oldest girl Julia with money for her uniform, transportation, and school supplies so she can finish high school. Without this help Julia would have stopped going to school. If it wasn't for God and SCM none of this would have been done."

Photos left: After the repairs to keep the family safe and dry



Spiritual Director's Reflection



Inner Hunger

Silent Children's Mission, while providing for the material needs of the poor, seeks above all, to develop their souls and nourish their relationship with God. The heart of our mission then rests on answering the following questions. What is the greatest hunger of the poor, for what do they most long for? What do the poor most thirst for?

These questions as you may have guessed are not just for the poor we serve in other countries but are questions we must answer for ourselves as well, for we are all spiritually poor, that is, we are all in need of God and must depend on Him. This came into greater focus at our parish this week as we not only listened to the encounter of Jesus with the woman at the well but watched the movie *Babette's Feast*, the most Eucharistic movie I have ever seen. This movie serves as a perfect appetizer to feasting on the story of Jesus and the woman at the well, because it depicts how we all have deeper thirsts and hungers than the material desires of our bodies.

The movie opens with Lorens, a young man, who like us all, is searching to satisfy his deepest longing for happiness and fulfillment. After a failed love encounter, he convinces himself he will find fulfillment by dedicating himself to the military and making a great name for himself, stating: "I will think of nothing but my career and someday I will cut a brilliant figure in the great, wide world." It is only in the twilight of his life, however, after having achieved great success and honor, that he discovers the shallowness and vanity of all that he chased after and so experiences a deep regret and dissatisfaction of his life choice. Looking at himself in a mirror, he says "Vanity. Vanity. All is vanity." He asks his wife "Can the sum of a row of victories over many years be defeat?" He tragically realizes his pursuit of worldly honor and fame has not quenched his deepest desire

nor satisfied the deepest longing of his heart.

Similarly in the Gospel this week, we encounter a thirsty woman at the well who is clearly thirsty for something more than water. She has had six lovers, who have all failed to satisfy her. Jesus, the Living water, however, meets her dry soul at a well that cannot satisfy the deepest thirst she has. This is because both Lorens, the woman at the well and each of us have a thirst and hunger of the soul which God's love alone can satisfy and which give us true lasting happiness and fulfillment.

Enter Babette. She is a French woman who decides to spend all of the money she won at a lottery on cooking a huge French Feast. She hopes this banquet will bring happiness to the sisters who employ her and help to reconcile their fractured prayer community. The banquet is absolutely exquisite and during the dinner, General Lorens is so impressed that he states he has only tasted something similar in France. He shares a story about how in France he heard of a woman, (who we later realize is Babette) who was a head chef, and "had the ability to transform a dinner into a kind of love affair, a love affair that made no distinction between bodily appetite and spiritual appetite."

This deftly describes the central metaphor of the whole movie and speaks of satisfying the deep spiritual thirst and hunger we all have for love. This reflects the truth the catechism begins with which states that our hearts were made with a deep hunger for God, a hunger that God alone can satisfy. Everybody therefore has a hungry heart which longs for the infinite. Jesus, born in a feeding trough, desires to satisfy this hunger in the Eucharist. Babette serves as a Christ figure who not only unselfishly gives up everything she has, but in giving of her very self, she nourishes her friends. The feast she provides therefore is a symbol of the self-sacrificial love Christ offers us in the Eucharist. The Eucharist then is the sacrament of satisfaction which gives us a foretaste of heaven, the true hope of nourishing our deepest hungering ache.

Through the Eucharist, Jesus not only fulfills and reconciles us, but also unites us together. We are made to be in communion with God as Augustine famously wrote: "our hearts are restless till they rest in God." St John Paul II puts it this way: "*God has placed in human hearts a 'hunger' for his word, a hunger which will be satisfied only by full union with him. Eucharistic communion was given so that we might be 'sated' with God here on earth, in expectation of our complete fulfillment in heaven.*"

More specifically, both the movie, and the story in the gospel show that our heart aches for the infinite. Nothing finite can satisfy us. So many of us

take our hunger to the wrong table. We attempt to satisfy our ache for the infinite with that which is finite and so can never fully satisfy. The reality is that there is no ultimate satisfaction of our desires on earth. All created things merely give us a glimpse of true heavenly satisfaction, where all our desires will be fulfilled.

Both Babette's feast, and the story of Jesus encounter with the woman at the well are beautiful reminders of the Easter feast that we are preparing for during Lent. Each Eucharist is not only a sacrament or a sign of the ultimate communion we get to experience in the heavenly banquet, but a glimpse or a foretaste of that heavenly banquet we get to share in now.

Let us end with a prayer of St Bonaventure:

"May my heart ever hunger after and feed upon you, Whom the angels desire to look upon, and may my inmost soul be filled with the sweetness of your savour; may it ever thirst for you, the fountain of life, the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, the fountain of eternal light, may it ever seek you, find you, run to you, meditate on you, speak of you, and do all for the praise and glory of your name, and be you alone ever my hope, my entire confidence, my riches, my delight, my pleasure, my joy, my rest and tranquillity, my peace, my sweetness, my food, my refreshment, my refuge, my help, my wisdom, my portion, my possession, my treasure; in Whom may my mind and my heart be ever fixed and firm and rooted immovably." Amen.

Peace,
Fr. Michael Della Penna ofm

Guatemala continued



Medical Service Trip 2024

Dental health continues to be a public health challenge in Guatemala with many children not having access to a dentist or dental hygiene education. Many do not have a toothbrush or toothpaste. The two photos represent many of the children we identified with severe dental caries, often suffering with infections.

From Frankie:

It was a great pleasure to visit with Leidy again and see the tremendous improvements in her health. Personally, it was a gift to see the incredible love this family has for each other and the sacrifices they make for this small child.

From Juan Carlos:

"Frankie, I tell the people that you and I are bridges for them to get the help God provides. My objective is for them to understand that what they see (donations and what we buy for them) is from a team of people who make this possible. And it is God who coordinates this complicated "chess game" for these miracles to present in their homes."



Zambia

From Sr. Anastazia M'lauzi at St. Thomas Mission Hospital in Chibombo, Zambia:

"This is to sincerely thank you Frankie and the Silent Children Staff for the support of the children. Enclosed are pictures of sick children that we helped and have recovered; there are many but I send just a sample of our children.

With the donation we were able to buy assorted medicines, food, school requirements, and transport costs for sick children to come for injections and cleaning of wounds. Thank you very much, may the almighty God continue to work through you to serve the children."



Photo left: Child A with developmental delays upon arrival at St. Thomas Hospital suffering from acute malnutrition



Photo left: Baby A six months after being helped at St. Thomas Hospital with assistance from Silent Children's Mission



Photo far left: Typical admission during this time of drought

From our benefactors...

"It was wonderful to see the progress of the Simone Centre in Mkanda and the Munda house in your recent newsletter. We are so grateful for all you do. We would like to make a donation towards the Simone Centre as God has blessed us abundantly over the years and we'd like to pass on a small part of these blessings. Please use it for whatever is most needed. We always thought we'd like to go to a poor country and help people to learn about agriculture and growing their own food, but that was not meant to be - what you are doing is exactly what we'd hoped to do. God bless you abundantly for that and giving the people and students a job and the children food to eat."

Malawi



Update from MALAWI:

Their names are Mayesero and Felida born in 2014, 10 years old from Kambani village near Ludzi. They were born from a mother with mental illness, and grew up in a poor family cared by their grandmother, their father is unknown. Two weeks after they were born, the mother chose to keep one baby while the other one was left in the bush. She brought Felida home where she prepared to keep and breastfeed her. When the people noticed that one baby, Mayesero, was missing, they questioned her and she told them that she left the baby in the bush because she only wanted to keep one. The villagers found the baby in the bush and brought her back but the mother refused to breastfeed the baby and the poor grandmother fed Mayesero with mere white maize flour porridge.

As a result of poor feeding, she was stricken by severe malnutrition, until when she was 1 year, 8 months, when she was identified by Sister Bernadette Densani of the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa in Malawi as she was distributing food to malnourished children.

Fortunately, Mayesero responded very well to proper food she was being given by the Sisters and thanks be to God that her brain is not affected and this time both are doing very well at school and are in standard 4. It is our hope that they will continue performing well for a brighter future.

We are grateful to Silent Children's Mission for school fees support and other needs for both girls.

Twin on the right is Felida, left is Mayesero

Sister Adelaida Jere

Sisters of Charity of Ottawa, Ludzi Convent

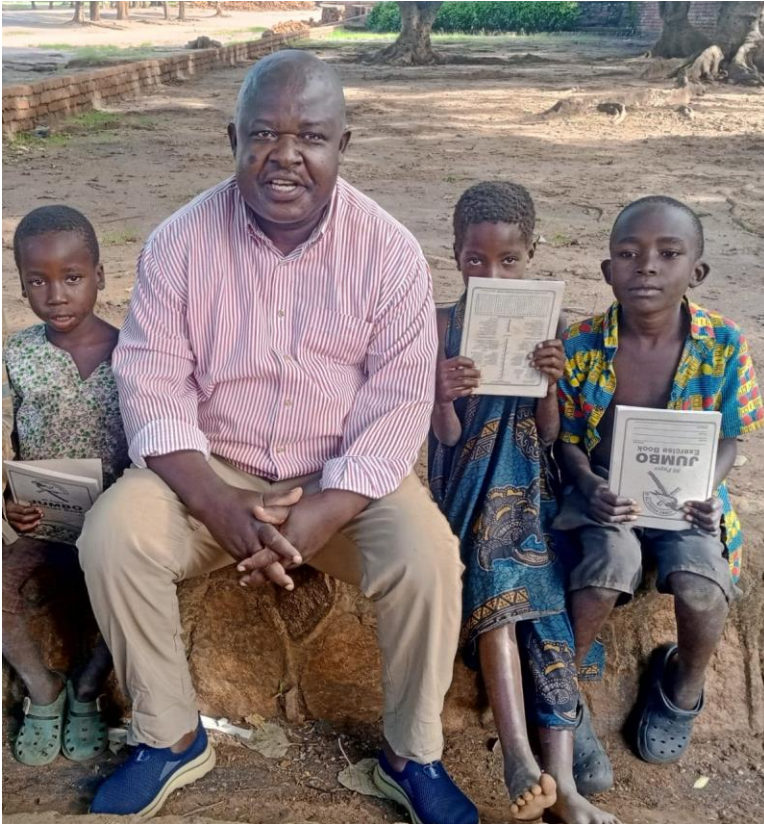
From our benefactor....

"I feel so blessed to be part of an organization that helps children with their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. I can't believe how efficiently you run SCM with only 3 percent spent on administration fee. God Bless You all and thank you for all you do for the poor."

From our benefactors....

"May God bless you and all the volunteers for your love of the poor. Thank you for being our conduit to helping God's loved ones."

"Thank you very much for that beautiful card you sent me and for that impressive newsletter. I will share it with family and friends. I am sorry I forgot to add this note to my donation yesterday – I guess this can happen when a person is almost ninety years old. I can see and read in your newsletter you have been doing very good work. I will keep you in my prayers."



Malawi continued

Update from Fr. Sylvester, Malawi:

"Greetings from Ganya, St. Anne's Parish! Wishing you an abundance of God's blessing on this Lenten journey and assuring you of our prayers for the work you are doing serving the Silent Children all over the world. We promise to pray for all the benefactors of SCM during this period of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Christopher has started serving Mass yesterday and sends his greetings!



I have started the goat keeping project as part of our goal of self-reliance. I bought eight goats and now they are already 14 goats! I have ventured into banana farming and have planted 200 in December. The money for all these projects are from what you donated to us. I have admired what Sr. Bernadette and the Sisters of Charity are doing in Mchinji."

From our benefactors...

"Your recent newsletter was so uplifting! So happy to know that our donations are making a difference in the lives of these beautiful children. They are in my prayers and may they continue to thrive and grow and make their world a better place! God bless all of you at Silent Children's Mission."

"We would like to donate to help the poorest of the poor especially the children. Our hearts were broken when we saw their cute little faces. We wish we could make a bigger donation thank you for your compassionate work serving the poor. God bless you!"

"Please find a donation enclosed for whatever is needed most. Thank you for all that you do and the love you put into the world!"

Urgent Appeal from Sr. Josephine in ZAMBIA



DROUGHT IN ZAMBIA!

SCM is sending a special request for extra funds for the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi in Ndola, Zambia. Please consider donating even a small amount, so we can help them feed more children.

Recent message from Sr. Josephine:

“Frankie – thanks for your message. For some weeks now the rains have stopped. The maize from last year is finished due to hunger. This year we have planted maize and sweet potatoes and special mangoes which ripen in April. I am praying 24 hours for more rains! In our hospitals there is not even pain killers and medication for malaria. Children are starving. I tell you – you can cry. The kwacha has depreciated against the dollar. People are speaking out. Please keep us in your prayers. God bless.”

How you can help

CANADIAN DONATION: Send a cheque written to: **Silent Children's Mission** and mail it to: 16060 Concession 8, Schomberg, Ontario, L0G 1T0, Canada (Make sure to include your mailing address for a tax receipt) *Please note: tax receipts are sent quarterly with the newsletters*

US DONATIONS: Send a cheque written to: St. Leonard's Parish and mail it to: St. Leonard's Church 320 Hanover St., Boston, MA 02113 – Please indicate on your cheque “donation for SCM”.

DONATE ONLINE: By sending us an email money transfer to silentchildrenca@yahoo.com or through Canada Helps (SCM Registration #815949607RR0001) Please remember us in your will.

QUESTIONS OR INVITE FRANKIE TO SPEAK? Write to silentchildrenca@yahoo.com or call us at 416-418-0314

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: www.silentchildrensmmission.com

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TAX RECEIPT? Write to us at scmtaxreceipts@gmail.com

PRAY FOR OUR CHARITY and its benefactors. We pray and fast for you every First Friday of each month. Unite your intentions to ours!

Please consider sharing this newsletter with your family and friends