

Silent Children's Mission

*Peace begins
with a Smile*

Mother Teresa

Photo: children in Ludzi,
Malawi c/o Sr. Bernadette



Frankie Burg-Feret
Executive Director

Executive Director's Update

"While Mary is in the last months of her pregnancy, she and Joseph are uprooted from their home in Nazareth and forced to travel to Bethlehem to be counted in a census – an oppressive tool that the Romans used to help collect taxes from the people. Because "there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7), Mary experiences childbirth in an environment of extreme poverty. She cannot even give Jesus the basics of what any mother would want to offer a newborn baby. Instead a manger, a feeding trough for the animals, serves as an improvised cradle for the Son of God." (Sri, 2017)

I have often meditated on Luke's gospel story of the birth of Jesus and each time I am amazed at the mystery of God's coming. During this Advent season, we are called to penance, prayer and works of mercy and in a recent homily,

Pope Francis said: "the works of mercy give glory to God more than anything else" (Nov. 22, 2020). God leads us to the Saviour through the poverty of His birth and this gift of divine love leads us to the poor, the blind, the lame, and the outcasts inspiring us to be His hands and His heart here on earth. In this newsletter, our spiritual director has written a beautiful article on the theme of giving, which provides much to ponder. I pray his inspiring words will help you prepare for Christmas.

Although SCM was not able to visit the children and our missionaries this past summer; we don't have to leave our homes to be aware of the great suffering in the world today. Hunger, unemployment, homelessness, and poor health have always been around, but these problems are exacerbated by the

current pandemic. Job losses and deprivation caused by the covid-19 virus are affecting the already-poor and creating millions of “new poor”. The number of children living in poverty has increased by 15 percent since the start of the pandemic (Unicef, 2020).

The Unicef/World Bank’s 2016 study entitled *Poverty and Shared Prosperity* found that 767 million people live on less than \$1.90 per day (extreme poverty) and that half these people are children under the age of 18 years. In order to break this cycle of poverty they identify a need to invest in prenatal care, early child development programs, schools,

clean water, good sanitation, and universal health care. These priority areas are the same needs that our SCM missionaries identify and request assistance for each year. The solution can be complicated, but it can also be as simple as providing the means for children to wash their hands with soap and clean water, and to wear a pair of shoes. These simple things which we take for granted, can prevent deadly diseases caused by parasites that enter the body through exposed skin. An estimated 6.3 million children die every year of preventable diseases because their families cannot afford basic needs or access health care (UN Report,

2018). This SCM report provides you with some examples from our missionaries and with your assistance we can continue to make a difference in the lives of these children and their families.

We are so grateful to our benefactors and it is because of your love and generosity that we truly have a community of love! If you have any questions about this mission, including how donations are dispersed, we would be happy to answer your questions. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to us. May God bless you and your families this Christmas season!

Peace, Frankie



Report from Sr. Florence Msowoya, Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Mzuzu, Malawi

“Dear Frankie, Cordial greetings from Mzambazi. We are all fine and the beneficiaries are also happy with the assistance they get from SCM. Mzambazi Community Hospital was founded in 1949 by the sisters of the Immaculate Conception from Canada. These sisters were invited to Malawi by the Bishop who was also from Canada. The hospital was handed to us in the 90s when they all retired and went home. This rural hospital has a bed capacity of 80. We deliver 70-90 babies each month. With the help of SCM we prevent many deaths. There is still much we need as referring women to the nearest hospital is 80km and it is not easy as the road is muddy, slippery and impassable during the rainy season. We appreciate the assistance we receive and don’t take it for granted.”

God bless you always. Sr. Florence

(above left) “This boy’s name is LACKSON. He was born with the weight of 2 kg but after one month and three weeks the weight dropped instead of increasing, he is 1,6kgs and each day there is weight loss. His mum doesn’t produce enough milk due to lack of food in her body. With the money received from SCM, we are able to purchase nutritious supplemental milk.”

(left) Grace’s mother died in 2017 and has been surviving with the help of Silent Children’s Mission. Her grandmother takes care of her and she is grateful for the assistance.



From our Spiritual Director

Give what is right, not what is left over



Pope Francis, in a recent audience, reflected thoughtfully on charitable organizations. He made several comments that express the very essence of Silent Children's Mission and articulated the reasons we exist and the purpose of our charity. He began with a powerful observation: He said simple philanthropy without partnership diminishes both donor and recipient. Pope Francis, in fact, has been outspoken and highly critical of such philanthropy throughout his pontificate, specifically calling out those who are trying to use their money to buy their salvation or ease their conscience. He warned that "Charity is not about offloading one's sense of guilt." In doing so, the Pope rightly pointed out that all charity, instead, must be rooted in the love of God, or else it becomes a means for an occasion of dehumanizing both, those who give and those who receive. We are all well aware how some politicians and so-called philanthropists can use donations as strategic photo opportunities to promote themselves or worse as a means of control. A solely secular motivated 'giving' can at times be condescending, degrading and self-serving.

Pope Francis, as the choice of his name affirms, has consistently advocated for our Church to be a poor Church for the poor. The reason however is not what you may think. In his vision, we do not necessarily help the poor to evangelize them but rather that the poor may evangelize us. The Pope knows that ministering to the poor gives us an opportunity to come out of ourselves. The Pope shared that we can avoid a cold, detached and mechanical charity that is merely about "throwing a few coins at people" by not only giving with love from our heart but using warm loving gestures such as looking at our brothers and sisters in the eyes and touching their hands. These simple yet poignant actions communicate a genuine love that is concrete, tactile, and palpable. I recently had this confirmed to me by our first graders! When I asked them what praying with the heart was, one boy named Tommy defined it this way. He said 'Praying with the heart means praying like you care about it.' I don't think any theologian would disagree. This is truly what Silent Children's Mission is all about, since our very mission states:

"The goal is to let the poorest of the poor know someone cares - that God has not forgotten them but loves them."

The priority of SCM is to continually communicate the love of God to the poorest of the poor. We do this through various means; providing basic needs, education, healthcare, spiritual care and counseling so that our brothers and sisters who have limited resources can not only live a life of dignity, but most importantly have the opportunity to develop their souls and at the same time help develop ours!

This reciprocal spiritual or transcendent dimension, while key, is nothing new in the history of our Church, and has its roots in the early Church which had a well developed theology of charity and even recognized the poor as a reflection or sign of the incarnation. This only deepened through history as Clement of Alexandria for example spoke of the "pious poor" who became blessed occasions for acts of charity and almsgiving in imitation of Christ himself. Basil of Caesarea however went further and insisted that giving was no longer merely an act of honor, status, civic duty, or emulation of Gods generosity but rather a matter of justice. According to Ambrose, almsgiving could be redemptive. This does not seem too large a leap considering Christ had made it clear that when we do something for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do it to Him.

Charitable giving therefore is not only an opportunity to reinforce the relationship between the donor and the recipient in a spiritual way, that is one that is at once reciprocal, communal and inclusive, but also is an opportunity of encounter with God. In this way, charitable giving

not only nurtures intimate social harmony, peace, and justice but also one's personal salvation.

We are all familiar with the expression of the St. Francis' prayer "It is in giving that we receive." St Paul in fact records that Christ taught it is better to give than receive. The deepest reason however is embedded in the very fabric of our being. As St. John Paul II observed: The very meaning and purpose of man, that is, his ultimate fulfillment, can

come in no other way than through a sincere gift of self. This speaks of the very logic of Christianity, which sees love as a gift of self, or self-donation. This is the call of every human person. To love and therefore make oneself a sincere gift of self to the other. St. Pope John Paul II reminded us this is precisely what gives a person their truest meaning. Christ himself taught us this through his sacrifice on the cross which revealed the highest degree of love is the total gift of self in giving one's life for the person loved (cf. Jn15:13).

By sharing in the mystery of the Cross, Jesus revealed "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

As we prepare for the birth of our Saviour, let us be reminded of His great love for us and allow His example of the giving of Himself to inspire us to give with caring and generosity.

Peace,
Fr. Michael Della Penna

Updates from our Missionaries

Report from Guatemala



Clockwise from top left:
Teresita continues to receive care and follow-up.

Nurse Mirna delivers Christmas gifts from SCM to children at Valle who have not been able to go to school since the pandemic started. Mirna has been overseeing their health needs by providing vitamins and much needed medications to those most in need.

Deborah who experienced a severe burn received vitamins donated by SCM benefactors.

Visiting Maritzia and Olympia in February 2020 with Maria Mercedes (Secular Franciscan and SCM missionary in Guatemala).



How you can help: Please spread the word about our charity to teachers, friends, prayer groups, colleagues, pastors, etc. We rely on Divine Providence but many have asked if they could fundraise, and the answer is yes! Benefactors have contributed via: bake sales, bazaars, dinners, sale of rosary bracelets, donations in lieu of flowers at a funeral, in lieu of money for a Christmas, birthday, anniversary, or retirement gift. All funds donated, no matter what size, are welcome!

Updates from our Missionaries

Report from Sr. Annie Chiluba, St. Theresa Mission Hospital, Ibenga, Zambia

“Following the receipt of funds from your association, the hospital proceeded to procure the oxygen regulators for 6 departments where supply of oxygen is critical. Due to the global outbreak of covid-19 in which Zambia is no exception, the hospital management decided to use some of the money received to buy face shields for our staff and infra-red thermometers to help in the prevention and fight against this pandemic. The hospital has a total of 150 members of staff. The 106 shields bought is a milestone for the hospital in the prevention of covid-19 for the front liners. St. Theresa Mission Hospital has confirmed positive cases of Covid-19. Thank you so much for your support.”

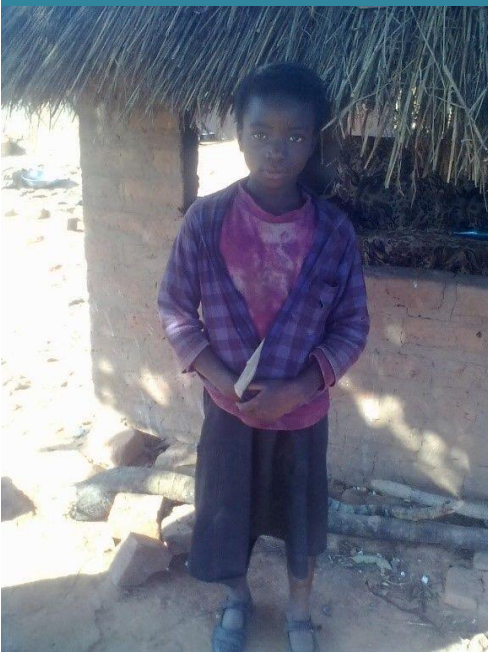
Patients waiting to be seen by a nurse 6 feet apart



Face shields protect the medical staff working at the hospital



Report from Fr. Kennedy Seketa, Lusaka, Zambia



Astridah in her village (2015)



Astridah (now in 2020)



Brian Chama learning to read and write

Brian Chama was first enrolled at Chileshe Chepela School for children with special needs. He has since been moved to a new school where he will be learning life skills and is currently learning how to read and write. Astridah is grateful for the opportunity to go to school will enter grade 10 in 2021. Because of the pandemic schools closed prematurely and the pupils will finish their grades a bit later. All the pupils appreciate the life changing opportunities given through SCM. Thank you and stay safe, Fr. Kennedy

Updates from our Missionaries

Report from Sr. Mary Frieda, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Ghana



November 18, 2020 "I would be grateful if you could come to our aid to save the life of a child of four years who is very sick with malnutrition. He is not able to sit or move on his own. He was baptized Andrew this morning due to his serious condition."

November 27, 2020 "I am so grateful. Little Andrew is responding to treatment! Could you believe? You cannot imagine the joy of SCM coming to our aid at this time. We received another child in serious condition, baptized Peter due to his serious condition as well. God bless all your benefactors! We wish you a happy and spirit filled advent"

Report from Sr. Cecile Uwizeyemariya, Penitent Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Rwanda Home for Abandoned and Disabled Children

"With the amount sent it was given to the centre for the disabled and the nutrition centre in Rusizi, as well as the centre for the disabled in Kitabi. We were able to buy pampers, bed sheets, mosquito nets and food for the children. We still need your support in addition we need clothing as some children arrive to the centre in rags. On my part and in the name of my congregation, with all heart, I would like to thank you very much for all you do for us. May the Lord Jesus shower you all with blessings."



Interesting facts:

According to a World Bank economist (Milanovic, 2016), the top 1% global elite makes \$34,000 US annual income and live mainly in North America and Europe. The global median salary is \$1,225 US dollars.

Updates from our Missionaries

Report from Sr. Lubingu, Poor Clare Sisters, Lusaka, Zambia



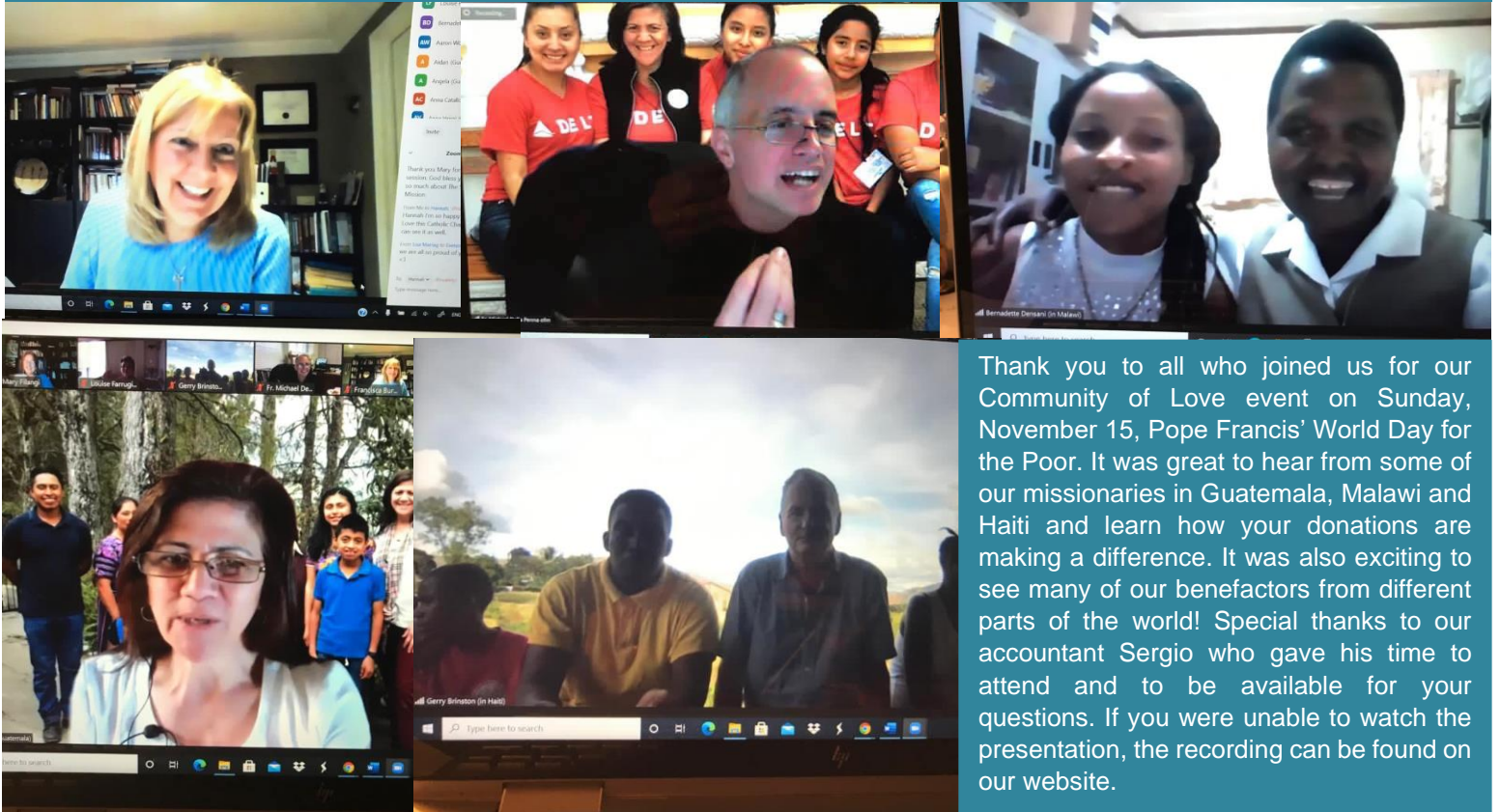
“We are targeting maize for mealie meal, beans and ground nuts that is nutritious to the community's diet and our poor around us and now in Francis Clare farm. Today was the last day we had with our brothers the prisoners who were helping us clear the land for cultivation. They went very happy but sad that the outings have ended. One was pleading that we may invite them again, because at least they get enough good food. Today we shared the soap, toothbrushes, vaseline and plastic sandals and we prayed together. I spoke to one prisoner who told me Sister pray for my children they are very small. He will come out in 2022. Then the prison officer whispered to me that he is innocent only he did not have a lawyer to defend him. These are the people we are carrying in our prayers. On behalf of our community today we fed them and talked to them.”

Report from Gerry Brinston, Haiti



“This young girl begs in the market to help feed her three siblings. Her father is dead and her mother is in the hospital. She is blind in one eye and walks with a severe limp. She travels a long distance to come to the market to beg. We are visiting her mother on Monday to see how we can help. She demonstrates the desperate love of a child to preserve her family.”

Community of Love Event



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) ***Please note: tax receipts are sent quarterly with the newsletters***

DONATE ONLINE: By sending us an email money transfer to silentchildrenca@yahoo.com or through Canada Helps (SCM Registration #815949607RR0001) We also have an iTrade account for those wishing to donate shares. Please remember us in your will.

QUESTIONS? Write to us at silentchildrenca@yahoo.com or call us at 416-418-0314

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: www.silentchildrensmmission.com ,

INVITE FRANKIE TO SPEAK at your school, church, group, club or fundraiser.

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

PRAY FOR OUR CHARITY, our benefactors and especially the children. We pray and fast every first Friday of each month. Please join us!

Please consider sharing this newsletter with your family and friends