

SILENT CHILDREN'S MISSION

Celebrating 15 years: June 14, 2011-2026



**"May we learn to welcome
life unconditionally, to
tenderly care for fragility,
to accompany each stage
with respect, and to
bravely defend those who
have no voice."**

Pope Leo XIV

Photo left: Solomon in Cerca Carvajal, Haiti

Dear friends of SCM,

Recently, I was having a conversation with my tante (aunt) about her childhood in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam. As she recounted those desperate years, I was struck by how much her experience parallels the trauma faced by children today in many poor, war-torn, and forgotten places around the world.

My oma and opa (grandparents) had seven children to feed, and watching their children suffer from hunger was heartbreaking. My opa was a photographer and artist, while my oma was a piano teacher—professions that offered little opportunity during the war. Having lost their livelihoods, my grandparents were desperate. Eventually, they found an apartment in the Jewish section of Amsterdam. Many of the surrounding apartments stood empty because their

Jewish occupants had either fled or been taken away to concentration camps. My opa would enter some of these abandoned homes and remove doors, doorframes, and whatever wood he could find. The wood was used to cook their meals and keep the family warm through the bitter winter. Their desperation reached its peak during the Dutch famine of 1944, known as the *Hongerwinter*, when Nazi restrictions brought food and fuel supplies to a virtual standstill. My opa also used his artistic skills to earn money by creating forged documents that helped Jewish people escape the Netherlands. My tante recounted that the children were sometimes the ones who delivered these documents because they were less likely to be suspected of resistance activities. Food was incredibly scarce. Children who attended



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:



(photo left: Frankie in front of the apartment in Amsterdam)

cont... school during the permitted hours might receive a small amount of soup, but even the daily food rations eventually became dangerously inadequate. My family survived on soup made from potato peels and porridge made from leftover barley chaff, which they obtained from a nearby brewery and ground into a powder. They received ration stamps for necessities such as coffee, and my opa would alter the stamps so that the family could obtain enough bread to survive.

As I listened to my tante, I couldn't help but think of the children we love and serve through Silent Children's Mission. The circumstances are different, but the suffering can be remarkably similar: hunger, poverty, abandonment, war, exploitation, and trauma. So much of this suffering is man-made. I remember that my opa was very angry with my oma whenever she spoke about the war. He believed those memories were best left in the past. Yet I am

so grateful that they shared their stories with me. Those stories have become part of my own understanding of the world—and a reminder that we must never forget what human beings are capable of doing to one another. Today, more than eighty years later, it is difficult not to wonder how much our world has really changed. Greed, poverty, and indifference remain very much with us. And once again, children are often among those who suffer the most.

Lately, I have been reflecting particularly on children living on the streets of Sierra Leone—children who have been abandoned, left hungry, and forced to fend for themselves. UNICEF uses the term Children in Street Situations (CiSS) to describe children for whom the street is their primary home. Around the world, millions of children experience life on the streets, driven there by poverty, abandonment, conflict, and other circumstances beyond their control. Their lives are marked by trauma. Survival can mean hazardous child labour, waste collecting, begging, or, in Sierra Leone, breaking rocks for hours each day. The streets offer little protection, leaving children vulnerable to physical abuse, exploitation, and violence. Abandoned children—especially young girls—can be particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Many grow up without access to education. The psychological effects of prolonged hunger, fear, violence, and abandonment can be profound. These children are often socially stigmatized and, because they are so easily overlooked, can remain largely invisible to the systems and social safety nets intended to protect vulnerable children.

It is painful to recognize that, in so many ways, our world has not changed enough since the time my tante described to me. There is still so much darkness. But there is also light. Our SCM benefactors are that light.

The stories my family shared with me have made me reflect personally on what I am willing to give—and what time I am willing to share - to make this world a better place for children who have so little. We cannot change the world but as Mother Teresa says: "If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."

In this issue of our newsletter, you will find updates from several of our missions, along with a special focus on the upcoming completion of the St. Elizabeth Home of Light in Bo, Sierra Leone, West Africa. This home will provide abandoned and trafficked children living on the streets with something they have been denied for far too long: safety, dignity, and a place to call home. The story of Franceses is heartbreaking, but it is also a story filled with hope. Soon, Franceses will have a safe home where she can receive counselling, education, nutritious food, and the love and care every child deserves. This is what happens when we refuse to accept that darkness must have the final word. Because you, our SCM benefactors, decided that something must be done, Franceses and other vulnerable children will have a future filled with greater hope and possibility. Darkness will not win. Light will prevail.

Peace and all good, Frankie

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is despair, hope, Where there is darkness, light.*

FROM OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:



St. Francis and Sister Death

This October, the church marks the 800th anniversary of the Transitus of St. Francis — the very night he passed from this life into eternity, October 3, 1226. As he lay dying next to the Portiuncula in Assisi, Francis made one final request: that everything be stripped from him. He wanted nothing to come between him and God. They laid him naked on the bare earth, stripped of his tunic, his sandals, his very garments — returning to God exactly as he had come into the world. Then, in a final act of defiant joy, he invited the one we all fear most to become family: "Welcome, my Sister Death." Francis understood something most of us spend a lifetime avoiding: when everything is stripped away, what remains is not emptiness — it is God.

There is a great story about Satan, who believed that if he took everything away from Job, he would break him. He was shocked to find the truth: what he did not know was that God was Job's everything. It is a truth Francis sang about all his life, and a truth we encounter every time our mission sets foot in Africa or Central America. The poor children, women, and men we serve have all been stripped in one way or another — of wealth, of security, often of family. And in that stripping, they have found what Francis found: an unshakable dependence on the One who cannot be taken away. Without the distraction and temptation of the idolatry of self-sufficiency, many we serve have an instinctual, experientially deep trust in God. A famous Franciscan theologian once said that what kept Jesus on the cross was not the nails, but His faith and trust in the Father's love. That is the paradox at the heart of this article, and at the heart of the Gospel itself: those who have lost the most often possess the most. In fact, some have called the poverty St. Francis embraced a treasure. The world mistakenly believes happiness involves getting and accumulating things - but the contrary is true. Life and happiness are about

relationships - love relationships. The more love you give away, the more you have. I call this Divine mathematics. If you want to be happy, the Gospel formula is very simple: give love away early and often. Do not be greedy for things, and do not be stingy with your love. Walk as if you were created by God for love — because you were - and give it away indiscriminately, generously.

Built from Broken Bricks

Here is something I have come to believe about Francis and that crumbling chapel at San Damiano. We often say he initially misunderstood God's call — that he thought "rebuild my church" meant physically rebuilding by mortar and stone, when God actually meant something deeper - a spiritual metaphor for rebuilding relationships between His people, His church. But consider the bricks themselves. The ones Francis begged for door to door were almost certainly the leftovers — chipped, broken, the ones nobody else wanted. And with those, he rebuilt the house. That is not a detour from the call. That is the call. Rebuilding the living stones of the Church. Jesus told this same truth as a parable. A master prepared a wedding feast, but those invited refused to come. Angry, the master says: "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." When the room remained, the master says: "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full." "Invite everyone you find." (Matthew 22:9-10). The hall was filled — not with the honored and the whole, but with the willing. This is how Christ rebuilds His body. He gathers His living stones (1 Peter 2:5) from the margins: the ones nobody else wanted, the ones who were abandoned, poor and could not find a home. Which means the church is not a monument of flawless marble following some perfect blueprint. It is a hodgepodge - a lumping together of the bruised and broken, united precisely in its brokenness. The church is not a club for saints but a school for sinners.

The God of the Stripped Christ

This is where the stripping of Christ reveals a mystery. At the cross, the soldiers took Jesus' garments and cast lots for them. Clothing is a human marker - identity, status, role, protection. It proclaims outwardly what we do, but never who we are. To strip a man naked was to make him a nobody: a no-body, powerless. That is what the empire intended - to systematically erase His humanity, His kingship, His personhood. Benedict XVI saw it plainly: indifference, contempt, and greed joined

FROM OUR SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:

together in one act: "They took his garment". the goal was humiliation and to reduce Him to nothing. But here is the paradox: Jesus' nakedness did not erase who He was. It revealed it. Stripped of everything - garment, dignity, rights, even life itself - what remained was not emptiness. It was the God of love, the redeemer. His bruised, bleeding, broken, crucified body displayed the depth of His love written on His very flesh which was THE BODY OF CHRIST - a visible symbol of all those who were poor, marginalized, wounded and broken; the leftovers. This is who we are as Church - the stripped ones, the broken, the wounded, the homeless, the silent. And this is also the kenotic Christ - the One who in His weakness was strong; who, "though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). His apparent defeat - in surrender, in obedience, poured out - was precisely the victory of God, which redeemed His body the church and opened the gates of the kingdom. And it is the epitome of the true priest: one who dies naked on a cross — broken, bleeding, betrayed, beaten — and whose wounds become the doorway of our healing. Jesus' love does not wait for our wholeness. It redeems our brokenness through His wounds. By His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). Our fractures do not disqualify us from the feast; they are the very places where His light shines through. The living stones of His church are cracked — and every crack is a living testimony.

*If you go, go not only to
give — go to be taught.
Their spiritual depth is a
gift to the whole church.
Receive it humbly.*

Stripped of Everything but God

Consider what many of the families we serve have endured. Poverty has stripped away their illusion of self-sufficiency that most of us maintain our whole lives. There is no savings account to trust in, no insurance against drought or illness. And yet — visit these aldeas and villages and you will hear joyful singing. Jesus was unmistakable: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). What many don't realize is that only two beatitudes promise a present blessing — the rest point to the future. God is here and now, made present for those detached enough and openhearted enough to receive Him. Jesus never said the poor are blessed because they are poor — Scripture commands us to fight poverty (Proverbs 31:8-9). But poverty does what wealth resists: it humbles a person

and drives them to their knees. James writes that God "chose the poor in this world to be rich in faith" (James 2:5). Stripped of every earthly security, faith stops being a theory and becomes a lifeline.

The Trap We Must Avoid

It is easy to arrive in Africa or Central America as the giver and teacher — and leave having learned nothing. But the widow who pours her last handful of grain into a pot for a stranger has a theology our seminaries cannot manufacture. The orphaned child who worships with abandon in a mud-walled church has grasped a joy some of our comfortable congregations have forgotten. Mission is not one-way. We bring what we have — and receive what only they can give. Pope Francis said it well: when we go to evangelize the poor, it is not they who are primarily evangelized — it is we who are evangelized.

The Silent Children

Here is our mission's heartbeat: the silent ones — orphaned, abandoned, overlooked. And here is what we have witnessed: children raised in deep poverty often develop the most profound spiritual instincts. They pray like it matters, because it does. They sing because God is their one reliable constant. Their silence before the world is not silence before God — Heaven hears them (Psalm 10:17-18) and answers through His people. Through us.

What This Means for Our Trips

- If you go, go not only to give — go to be taught. Their spiritual depth is a gift to the whole Church. Receive it humbly.
- Fight poverty without despising dependence. We rightly pursue their flourishing — food, education, dignity — but we should never attempt to "rescue" them out of the very relational posture toward God we were sent to learn.
- Remember whose bricks you are. You go not as whole people fixing broken ones, but as broken bricks alongside them — gathered from the byways, built into the same house, healed by the same wounds.
- Amplify the silent. When they cry out in the night, part of God's answer must be us.
- Come back changed. Know in your heart whether you go to a mission or not, the conviction that stripped of everything, we are closer to God — and live like we believe it.

The Conclusion of the Matter

Eight centuries ago, a poor dying friar lay naked on the earth and called death his sister. He had nothing left and in that nothing, he possessed everything. The poor we serve know that same mystery. And this anniversary year, as we think about our different cultures, or feel called to go to our missions, may we pray and contribute as two communities — one stripped by poverty, one blinded by plenty — meeting together at the feet of Jesus. And there, at His feet, the silent children are already singing.

Peace, Fr. Michael



Gerry with the children

*Sometimes hope
begins with
simply refusing
to give up.*

Solomon: A Journey Toward Hope (see photo front page)

Four-year-old Solomon has faced more obstacles in his short life than most of us could imagine. Born with a cleft lip and palate, Solomon has grown up without the support of either of his parents. His father has abandoned him, saying to Gerry, "I don't care. He's your problem." Over the past few years, Gerry tried to help Solomon's mother by giving the family some goats, but she too



Solomon with his sister

UPDATE FROM GERRY BRINSTON

SCM board member, Cerca Carvajal, Haiti

eventually left. Thankfully, Solomon has not been completely alone. His 11-year-old sister, Maria, has cared for him since he was a baby. She carries him everywhere she goes and rarely leaves his side. Her devotion to her little brother is both beautiful and heartbreaking. At an age when she should simply be enjoying childhood, Maria has taken on the responsibility of caring for Solomon. Since Solomon was born, Gerry has been trying to find a way to get him the surgery he desperately needs. His first hope was to have him treated through Operation Smile in the Dominican Republic, where the surgery could have been provided at no cost. However, obtaining the necessary government permissions and travel documents proved extraordinarily difficult. At one point, funds were even paid for the required documentation, only for the paperwork to be lost. But another obstacle emerged: Solomon could not obtain a passport because his facial condition made it difficult for his photograph to meet the "requirements". He would apparently need to have the surgery first before he could obtain the passport needed to travel for surgery. How could a facial defect not meet the photo requirement?

Then, finally, a door opened. A doctor in Port-au-Prince has offered to perform Solomon's surgery. She needs to see him in person first to assess his condition, but there is now a real possibility that Solomon can receive the treatment he has waited so long for. There was another hurdle as Solomon's mother refused to travel with him to the capital. His aunt learned what was happening and offered to accompany him. After much effort, permission has now been given for Solomon to travel to Port-au-Prince. It's a small but significant step forward. Gerry has been disappointed so many times that he is cautious about getting his hopes up, but he says he will not give up on Solomon.

His story reminds us of how easily a vulnerable child can be overlooked when poverty, bureaucracy, family circumstances, and lack of access to medical care stand in the way.

But Solomon is not overlooked by God—and he is not overlooked by us.

Please pray that this opportunity will finally lead to the surgery Solomon needs, and that this little boy will soon be able to face the future with greater health, dignity and hope.

Sometimes hope begins with simply refusing to give up.



"The street is a hostile place for a girl and no amount of vigilance can shield her."

UPDATE FROM SR. VERONICA

St. Elizabeth Home, Bo, Sierra Leone

Franceses Kargbeni

"Franceses is 13 years old. She was not born to the streets but to a cramped but loving home in the outskirts of Bo, Sierra Leone. She was always the quiet one in her family. Some children live on the street because of tragic life situations which force them into this life - this is the case for Franceses. She is a survivor of Ebola and she lost her parents to this disease and so she and her two siblings were orphans. Since the government arranged some support for survivors, some relatives took them in but had no interest in them and shortly after they were thrown out of the house. Franceses lived on the street for the three years and has lost her two siblings as a result.

The street is a hostile place for a girl, and no amount of vigilance could shield her. She was raped many times by men who saw her not as a child who had lost everything, but as a body to be used. Each assault left invisible and soon visible scars.



She suffered infections that burned and her only medicine was the bitter herbs she could scavenge. She couldn't take the suffering, so she decided to be in the place where stones are broken and worked in this community just to eat food. The head of the women of this community is Mamie Queen who introduced her to Sr. Veronica and SCM. For the past two year she has attended school and her progress is excellent - she has progressed to primary six. She studies very hard and is humble yet determined to achieve a better life. Presently, Franceses is staying with a Catholic family until the home is complete. Every Friday she has a counseling session with Sr. Veronica and every Wednesday evening, she joins the Sisters to pray the rosary at St. Elizabeth home. Food is prepared for the children who join, and they pray and eat as a family."



ST. ELIZABETH HOME OF LIGHT

Bo, Sierra Leone

Sr. Veronica sends me daily updates with photos! I feel I know the workers personally and look forward to meeting them! The construction continues with a projected date of completion by end of October 2026. (Frankie)



Update from Sr. Bernadette

Mkanda, Malawi

"Right now, 76 children have already spent ten days at the farm, and another group will be coming to spend two weeks at the farm as well! The farm is

very conducive for the young ones. They enjoy playing together, interacting with each other, learning different skills like watering trees, working in the vegetable garden, and learning about different trees (tangerine, orange etc.) They are very active and happy and

of course they are enjoying the fruit and sugar cane!"

Photo below:

Another dream come true! the builders have begun mapping out the new Chapel on the farm which will be a place for the children to learn about their faith. All glory be to God!



How you can help:

- We accept e-transfers, cheques, and online donations via Canada Helps. To donate please see our website at: www.silentchildrensmisson.com
- If you have questions about tax receipts write to us at: scmtaxreceipts@gmail.com or call us at: 416-418-0314
- To save on postage costs, tax receipts are sent quarterly with the newsletters.

Request a speaker:

✉ silentchildrenca@yahoo.com

Address:

📍 16060 8th Concession, Schomberg, Ontario, Canada L0G 1T0



Update from Fr. Samuel

Freetown, Sierra Leone

"Dear SCM, I wish to introduce you to Burton. He is a boy of six years whose father died while he was in infancy. Born in Liberia to a Liberian father and a Sierra Leonean mother. Since the father's death, Burton and his mother with his three siblings could not afford to stay in Liberia due to the lack of financial support and was asked out of the rented home. So the mother is back in Sierra Leone and as a widow with four children, life

is very hard for them. She is 23 years old. The SCM donation helped them return to school. Burton being the youngest has faced severe challenges as the mother takes him along to find food. The women support their home by fishing, and it is the same river the children take a bath in and is used for drinking. The donation you sent supported this family and others with medication, school fees, and daily bread."



For over a decade, SCM has supported Fr. Samuel's projects.