



The poor are not the recipients of our gifts, they are the benefactors of our souls.

St. John Chrysostom

Photo right: After a class on healthy nutrition, participants share a meal together with the Franciscan Brothers of St. Joseph the Worker in Zambia



Letter from the Executive Director

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“It’s love that tells a child born into unimaginable and unacceptable poverty that they are not alone; they’re not invisible. It is love that tells a child that an endlessly merciful and all-powerful God knows their name and has a beautiful plan for their life.”

Santiago Mellado

Dear friends,

I received a phone call from a benefactor several months back that filled me with hope for our future knowing that there are good people in this world despite all the geopolitical challenges we are facing today. This special benefactor has opened her heart to helping children who are most in need and her desire to make a difference in the world has been a source of inspiration to us at SCM. After reading about the plight of the children in Sierra Leone, (newsletter issue #47), she felt the Holy Spirit fill her with a strong desire to do something. Sr. Veronica, one of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Visitation in Bo, Sierra Leone, described her dream to build a home for the children where they can live surrounded by love and care. “There are a lot of children who are abandoned and really need to be taken off the street. We can’t help all, but we can help by finding the children who are suffering the most.” That Saturday morning our benefactor informed me that she has decided to use her inheritance to build that home; she stated that she was well cared for, but these children have nothing.

The Sisters of our Lady of the Visitation were founded in 1980 by Archbishop Joseph Ganda and their mission is to assist children in need and to bring them God’s love. Sr. Veronica has a background in social work and has been helping the children

on the street for many years. With the full support of her superior Sr. Agatha Lavilie, we have begun the process to build a home that will house thirty children and several adult supervisors. Although we recognize that this process will be a slow one, the sisters have provided the plans, and the land has been purchased! The parcel of land is located on the outskirts of the city of Bo, which is the second largest city in Sierra Leone where the people live with serious socio-economic challenges. One of the greatest concerns is the increasing number of children living and working on the streets especially young girls who suffer violence and rape. It is estimated that 62% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence (Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey). These are the young girls and children that Sr. Veronica and her team have been helping. (see photo bottom right)

Sierra Leone is still recovering from a civil war that only ended in 2002 as well as the 2014-16 Ebola crisis that left so many orphans. These children have little opportunity to attend school as the school fees make the dream of education unattainable. Despite being a mineral rich country, most people are subsistence farmers, and the majority (60%) live in poverty leaving the country at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI) list; 184 of 193 countries (United Nations Development Report).

It is not surprising that this community of Sisters are named after that beautiful account of our Lady making haste to help her cousin in time of need. As a community-based intervention, this home will offer hope for children suffering from neglect, physical and sexual abuse, malnutrition, and other effects of extreme poverty. The Sisters who live in the community will be responsible for planning, decision-making, and carrying out all culturally appropriate activities in a wholistic and sustainable manner. It is a blessing for SCM to collaborate with this community and we are eager to see this dream come to fruition!

Many of us have limited resources but please be assured that every penny counts! The need is great, and your assistance is vital to continue helping the children. Please consider a donation to SCM this Lenten season.

Peace and all good,
Frankie Burg-Feret OFS

Ways you can help:

- Instead of throwing this newsletter in the garbage, consider sharing it with a friend, relative, or community group.
- When sending a donation in the mail – consider sending us an additional stamp. The increasingly high cost of mailing a letter is felt by all charities at this time.
- Consider joining us every first Friday in prayer and fasting for our benefactors, missionaries, and the children and families we serve.



“I plead with you — never, ever give up on hope; never doubt, never tire and never become discouraged. Be not afraid.” St. John Paul II

The Jubilee Year of 2025 – from our spiritual director Fr. Michael



“Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us.”

Samuel Smiles

In Pope Francis' letter *Spes Non Confundit* “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5), he announced the Jubilee Year of 2025; what is the significance of this year?

Pope Francis inaugurated the Jubilee of Hope on December 24, 2024, as a special and graced time for all of us, a kind of year-long spiritual renewal in which every day we are invited to open and experience the many gifts of grace that God our Father gives us so lovingly. The year 2025 then is a Jubilee Year of Hope, with the theme “Pilgrims of Hope” which runs until December 23, 2025. The Jubilee is grounded in the biblical jubilee year, which according to Leviticus 25, came around every fifty years and was celebrated by *forgiving* all debts, granting *freedom* to all in bondage, returning everyone to their homes and *family*, and allowing everyone to rest in God’s *love*. Therefore, a Jubilee is a time of renewal and new beginnings centered on Forgiveness, Freedom, and Family. In Israel, this meant nothing short of a total reset in which all debts were forgiven, all ancestral land was returned to its original family owners, and all oppressed Israelites were freed to return to their family and their land.

Why a year of Hope? Hope is having a firm, unshakeable confident trust in God who promises to give us eternal life and all the means necessary to obtain it. Hope is thus the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness without relying on our own strength but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1817). In his *Summa*, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that “the object of hope is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain. Now a thing is possible to us in two ways: first, by ourselves; secondly, by means of others. Hope makes patience possible, and you can endure hardships cheerfully (James 5:7-10) only when the anticipated reward makes it all worthwhile. Hope is also important because it is the key to joy. **Hope in Christ overcomes despair and**

discouragement. This hope we have is an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast. Jesus himself is our hope who taught us that we might have hope through perseverance and the encouragement of Scripture, always trusting with complete and unmovable certitude in the attainment of eternal life with the help of God.

The Jubilee therefore is a time for reconciliation, both with God and with others. Engaging in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, if possible, or seeking to mend broken relationships can be a powerful way to experience the mercy of God. Forgiveness is a transformative act that can lead to personal healing and renewed hope. In addition, regular prayer, both personal and communal, is vital during the Jubilee. Engaging in prayer services, novenas, or retreats can enhance one's spiritual life and deepen the experience of hope. Additionally, studying the teachings of the Church regarding mercy and hope can provide further insight and inspiration.

Pope Francis states that pilgrimage is a fundamental element of every Jubilee event; what does pilgrimage mean to the average layperson?

Abraham speaks to us of an essential dimension of pilgrimage, not only in his depth of faith, but in the fact that he was willing to leave the known in order to go into the unknown. This is done, not as a tourist to discover and see a new destination, but rather it is more profoundly the journey of being transformed interiorly. A successful pilgrimage is about the conversion of heart. It is an opportunity to meet and draw closer to God through prayer. We used to have a saying “Don’t try to get through the rosary; let the rosary get through you”. The point of pilgrimage is best described in the letter of James in which he writes: “draw closer to God, and God will draw closer to you”; to open your heart to God and so meet him and experience a change of life or metanoia.

Each pilgrimage is uniquely different as God speaks to us in the depth of our heart in a language of love that is personal and intimate. The goal is not seeking to experience a special mystical peak experience or a high feeling. This is precisely what St. Peter learns at the Transfiguration when he wants to build three tents to somehow capture and prolong the euphoric epiphany. I remember when I was young and prayed that God would move something or show me definitively the truth of his existence so I could dedicate my life to him. The irony was when I did go on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, he did make something move - the sun! The experience, however, did not do what I thought it would. I learned that no one experience does it, no matter how powerful or miraculous. Months later, I found myself falling into the same temptations because the peak experience did not carry me through; it was not enough. I realized that God doesn’t want us just to have one special mountain top experience but rather invites us into a relationship of love which is lived out authentically day by day. He invites us to deepen that love everyday throughout the ordinary moments of our life.

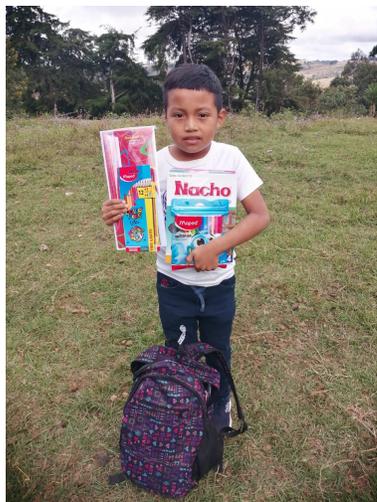
How is this Jubilee year calling each of us personally to be signs of hope to our neighbours throughout the world?

The goal for all pilgrims of hope is to grow in our capacity to love, that is be more loving to those around us. In this way, we really can be beacons of hope because people can see us a concrete example of authentically lived-out Christianity in a convincing way. We might be the only Bible somebody ever reads. If we are not the ones who are able to express the unconditional love of God and be examples of the love of Christ, then who will? I remember hearing a great story about a Rabbi who kept on yelling at God to do something about all of the atrocities on earth; the wars, babies dying, and all of the difficulties he experienced. God responded and said “I did do something about it. I sent you.” The goal is to be the hands and the heart of God so that we might communicate His love.

Peace, Fr. Michael Della Penna OFM

Update from Honduras – Fr. Patricio

“Thirty-four children were assisted with school fees and school supplies; these children come from the most marginalized urban and rural areas of the country. The aid was used to purchase school supplies and supplements so that the children can attend school. Without the support they would not be able to study since their parents do not have the financial resources. We want to express our sincere gratitude for your support over the last year. Your help has truly brought joy and hope.” From Padre Patricio, ACOES Honduras



Update from Malawi – Fr. Sylvester

“Thank you for who you mean to us... We have very good maize this year; we spend some of the SCM donation to buy five bags of fertilizer. (photo children with maize) The children in this photo normally come to get help with food, clothing etc. Today, after playing they came to me asking for \$1 to buy condoms. I asked them for what? They said they make footballs with condoms. They pump it up and cover it with plastics. This is a very interesting use of condoms....” From Fr. Sylvester, Ganya Parish, Malawi:



From a Benefactor:

“SCM Team: I wanted to take a moment to congratulate you on your informative newsletter. As a benefactor, I appreciate reading about your good works – often the fruit of your benefactors. May this Jubilee Year of Hope bless and multiply your selfless acts of love to the poor.”

Update from Chipata, Zambia – Fr. Benjamin



From Fr. Benjamin Soko, Franciscan Brothers of St. Joseph the Worker, Catholic Diocese of Chipata, Zambia

WASH Support

- Objective: To ensure access to clean water and promote critical points of handwashing.
- Initiatives Implemented: Purchasing of handwashing buckets, Sensitization on good hygiene and the Brothers were involved in the distribution of handwashing soap.
- Beneficiaries: Over 100 individuals, including mothers and children benefited from this WASH activity.
- Impact: Enhanced hygiene practices, reduced incidence of waterborne disease, and this promoted overall behaviour change and community health.

Conclusion

The behaviour change initiatives have resulted in sustained improvements among our beneficiaries. The combined efforts in school supplies, spiritual support, nutrition and WASH initiatives have significantly improved the quality of life for pregnant mothers and children under five in our community. Continuous support and collaboration are essential to sustain beneficiaries and further enhance community welfare.

Malitha is a 3-year-old girl living in a low-income community where access to nutritious food is limited, this was also due to the drought that was experienced between the 2023-2024 farming season in Zambia. Most days, she and her siblings had to rely on cheap, processed foods that were high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats.

The Franciscan Brothers of St Joseph the Worker, a local congregation donated chickens, peanut butter and soya meal powder to the community rural health facility center where Malitha and her family often visited for health care services. The Brothers also provided nutrition education to help families understand the importance of eating a balanced diet. (See photo on front page)

Malitha's mother, Siberia, was grateful for the donation and started incorporating more plant source proteins, chickens and vegetables into their meals. She learned how to cook nutritious meals that were not only good for their health but also delicious. As a result, Malitha's energy levels increased and she is active. She also started feeling more confident and happier, knowing that she was eating food that was good for her body.

The donation not only benefited Malitha and her family but some members of the community too. Children in the neighborhood started asking their parents for more peanut butter porridge and vegetables, and the community center saw an increase in attendance for their nutrition cooking demonstrations. Overall, the donation had a positive impact on the community's health and well-being, showing the power of nutrition in improving the lives of children and families in need.

We as The Franciscan Brothers of St Joseph the Worker under Chipata Catholic Diocese are so grateful for your generous donation to help our community. Your support means the world to us and will make a real difference in the lives of those in need. Thank you for your kindness and compassion, it truly makes a difference. Your contribution will help us continue to make a positive impact and create a better future for all. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Update from Ndola, Zambia – Sr. Josephine



From Sr. Josephine Mulenga, Franciscan Sisters of Assisi, in Ndola, Zambia:

We have just completed another distribution of food for 82 children most in need in our parish – we were able to provide vegetables, maize and cabbages from our garden. There is a serious problem due to the drought – in some areas the people are drinking dirty water. We are asking for prayers for these people. Thank you for your support.

Update from Chibombo, Zambia – Sr. Anastazia M'lauzi



Photo on the left:

“This baby was born with syphilis from a mother who is HIV positive at our St Thomas Mission Hospital. The baby was referred to a specialized hospital for further management.”

Photo on the right:

“Staff are very happy to receive items purchased with SCM donations for the hospital including medicine, medical supplies, cleaning materials, and toiletries.”



Dear Frankie,

“My humble greetings to you and the team you work with.

I hope and pray that Dr. Simone is well, I always pray for his late wife Joan, that she continues interceding for the children in Africa that she was so much in love with and cared for. Thank you and the team for your support of my work. I imagine that without your support I don't know what would be the situation. I do not have many sources of funding. May God bless you and supply you with plenty in your ministry.

We managed to buy a lot of medicine for the hospital, though not enough for the whole year because they are very expensive. We do receive some from the government and the congregation. We have many pregnant mothers with malnutrition and a lot of babies born with challenges. Some mothers come to deliver without baby clothes, thus we buy clothing and food for them. Your help goes a long way in supporting the needy in our locality. You really have made my apostolate meaningful because I have support for the vulnerable. Thank you very much for all the support given, may the almighty God bless you abundantly and we continue praying for one another.”

Update from Ibenga, Zambia – Sr. Annie Chiluba



IMPACT STORY

Name of Child: Hosiah Kulangwa
Age: 1 year 8 months

Background:

Hosiah Kulangwa is a young boy from a rural village near St. Theresa Mission Hospital. At just 18 months, he was suffering from severe acute malnutrition, Cerebral Palsy (CP), and Tuberculosis (TB). His parents, with limited resources, struggled to provide the medical care and nutrition he desperately needed. Hosiah's health had been steadily deteriorating, and his parents were extremely worried about his future. They turned to St. Theresa Mission Hospital, hoping for a glimmer of hope.

How the Donation Helped:

With the help of the donation from Silent Children's Mission (SCM), Sr. Annie Chiluba (Franciscan Sisters of Assisi) ensured that Hosiah received the urgent medical attention he needed. The funds were used to provide essential nutritional support, medication, and the specialized care necessary for treating his TB and managing his cerebral palsy. Hosiah was admitted to the hospital, where he received comprehensive care, including therapy and nourishment, tailored to his specific conditions.

The Change in Hosiah's Life:

Since receiving the treatment, Hosiah's health has shown remarkable improvement. He has gained weight, and his overall physical condition has stabilized. While his cerebral palsy continues to present challenges, Hosiah is now receiving physical therapy, which has significantly helped improve his mobility. His TB is under control, and he no longer faces the debilitating symptoms that once left him weak and bedridden.

Impact on Faith:

Hosiah's mother has expressed profound gratitude for the care her son has received. She believes that the support from SCM has been a blessing, both physically and spiritually. Hosiah's family has become more involved in the hospital's spiritual activities, with Hosiah's mother saying that their faith in God has been renewed through the kindness and support of the mission. Hosiah's recovery has strengthened their belief that God works miracles through the hands of those who serve His people.

Conclusion:

Thanks to the generous SCM donation, Hosiah's health has dramatically improved. His parents now have renewed hope for his future, knowing that with ongoing care, Hosiah can lead a more active and joyful life. The community too, has been deeply moved by his recovery, and Hosiah's story has become a symbol of faith, love, and the power of compassionate care.

"We are hopeful that we can count on Silent Children's Mission once again to help support the vital programs we continue to run here at Saint Teresa Mission Hospital. The impact of your contribution extends beyond physical healing, restoring hope to families facing hardships by offering medical, emotional, and spiritual support. Hosiah's remarkable recovery is a testament to the profound difference your support has made. Your continued partnership would be invaluable in ensuring that we can meet the growing needs of our community. Thank you again for your unwavering support and we look forward to another year of collaboration in making a meaningful difference."

FROM OUR SCM BENEFACTORS



“I would like this donation to go toward the family who needs a home to be built, this is from Sr. Anastazia who is very concerned for this family. My heart goes out to all the families in your wonderful newsletter. I wish I had lots and lots of money to send you. God bless you for all your work for Jesus.”

“Hi Frankie: It’s with a grateful heart I send this small donation to help with all the support you are providing for the Silent Children’s Mission. I appreciate that Dr. Simone introduced me to your work and that SCM uses the majority of the funds where it is needed. We are seniors living on only Old Age Canada Pension and limited investment. We are not well off but have our needs met and what we can donate we feel good knowing it is all being used where it is needed. I don’t expect an answer just finally expressing my gratitude for all that’s being done. Take care and keep up the good work.”

“I feel so grateful being able to donate to SCM, knowing that the majority of the money I donate goes directly to the Missionaries. I pray that the work of SCM is spread far and wide.”

Photo left: Rozalia is an orphan being raised by her poor, elderly grandmother. She attends Joan’s M’merampoyamba (nursery school) at the Simone Farm in Malawi and receives nutritious meals every day.

Let us, therefore, have charity and humility and give alms because it washes the stains of our sins from our clothes. For, although people lose everything they leave behind in this world, they, nevertheless, carry with them the rewards of charity and the alms they have given for which they will receive a reward and a fitting repayment from the Lord.

St. Francis of Assisi

How you can help

CHEQUE DONATIONS: Send a cheque payable to: *Silent Children’s Mission* and mail to: 16060 Concession 8, Schomberg, Ontario, L0G 1T0, Canada (Make sure to include your mailing address for a tax receipt)

ONLINE DONATIONS: Send us an email money transfer to silentchildrenca@yahoo.com or donate using a credit card through Canada Helps (SCM Charity# 815949607RR0001) Please remember us in your will.

US DONATIONS (for a tax receipt): Send a cheque written to: St. Leonard’s Parish and mail to: St. Leonard’s Church 320 Hanover St., Boston, Ma 02113 – Please indicate on your cheque “donation for SCM”. Or donate online via their website: <https://saintleonardchurchboston.org/donate>

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

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: www.silentchildrenmission.com

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

PRAY FOR SILENT CHILDREN’S MISSION We pray and fast for the children and families we serve, our missionaries, and our benefactors every First Friday of each month. Contact us if you would like to join in prayer and receive an email reminder.

Please note tax receipts are sent quarterly with the newsletters