



HELP THE HELPLESS

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JMJ

Christmas Newsletter

2016

This Newsletter contains the following four letters to Help the Helpless benefactors:

- **Help the Helpless President Fr. Altier's update on the good being done by the generous benefactors of Help The Helpless**
- **Fr. Antony's health situation and the ongoing missionary work at St. Mary's India**
- **Letter from Fr. Rafael regarding the work of the Missionary group of the Home of the Mother in Ecuador**
- **Letter from Sr. Sr. Mercedes Ramos Gómez – Servant Sister of the Home of the Mother working in Ecuador**

Christmas 2016 Newsletter from Fr. Altier (President of Help the Helpless)

Dear Benefactors,

Praised be Jesus Christ! There is a song that talks about this as being “the most wonderful time of the year.” Of course, the song is more focused on the secular and material aspects of the Christmas season, but we have to put our focus on the real meaning of Christmas. Not only does that mean that we have to focus ourselves on the spiritual aspects of Christmas, but most importantly, it is about the Person Who was born for us. In the darkest time of the year the One Who is light itself came into the darkness and, as St. John says, the darkness could not overcome it. What a huge blessing it is for us to not only be able to see that light, but to know Him and to know that He loves us so much that He came to us in the most irresistible manner: as a baby.

As we draw near in awe to this Baby, we realize that we are drawing near in awe to God Himself. This tiny creature Who poses no threat to us is also the all powerful Creator. So many are afraid of God, but His humility in becoming a baby demonstrates the way He loves. We do not have to be afraid of Him because the Person Who is the Baby is the same Person Who is the Creator. The love is the same, the approachability is the same, and His openness to receive us is the same. Remember, He came into the world to save the world, not to condemn it. The glory of Christmas demonstrates this truth in a profoundly practical manner.

Our Lord also promised that He would remain with us. At Help the Helpless we have the privilege to see this every day as He touches the hearts of so many people with immense generosity. For the poor of India and the impoverished in the quake and flood stricken areas of Ecuador, the goodness and kindness of the benefactors of Help the Helpless shine like a beacon in the darkness of lives that would have seemed otherwise hopeless.

As you know, through the miracle of your generosity, all of the building projects in India have been completed. The children continue to require housing, food, and education. Your great charity continues to provide for all of these needs. Our friend, Fr Antony, has struggled over the past few years with his health; on several occasions the people in India thought that his time had come to go to the Lord he has served so selflessly for so many years. However, the Lord has made clear that it is not Father’s time yet. Thankfully, Father has made sure to place competent people in positions of authority so that the work being done at St. Mary’s will see no reduction in its scope or quality.

The most immediate need we are facing right now is in Ecuador. As we mentioned in the last newsletter, Help the Helpless began work in Playa Prieta shortly before the quake and flood devastated the area. Not only have our heroic benefactors helped with the immediate needs of medical care, food, shelter, and clean up, but there is a shipment of 274,000 meals being sent that should arrive in the middle of January that is the fruit of the combined effort of Help the Helpless and Feed My Starving Children.

Right now the damaged buildings and infrastructure have been mostly removed. Several bamboo buildings have been erected which are serving as classrooms for the students. We hope to help the Sisters build some permanent structures for a chapel, a convent, a soup kitchen, a medical compound, and a school. None of this would be even remotely possible without your generosity.

So, in this most wonderful time of the year, I extend my thanks to each of you on behalf of the people in India and Ecuador and on behalf of the Board Members of Help the Helpless. I pray that God will continue to bless you and to shine through you as His light shining in the darkness in our world.

God bless you,

Fr. Robert J. Altier

Christmas 2016 Newsletter from St. Mary's India

Dear loving friends and benefactors!

Wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2017! Rev. Fr. Antony Xavier and we all are fine by the grace of God.

We are entering the final month of 2016. We are experiencing only a chill weather sans the seasonal rains. We are planning to celebrate the world disabled Day and St. Xavier's Feast which are slated on 3rd December. We have these functions along with a publication of a brief biography of Rev. Fr. Antony Xavier and the inauguration of the renovated arch at the entrance to St. Mary's on Dec 16, 2016. We are nostalgic about the previous celebrations. So many years have passed. Rev. Father till a few years ago was keeping very good health. Loving his plants and trees... amassing saplings where ever he goes... remembering the place of his favourite trees and plants.. and having special liking for them and carefully breeding them he was so ebullient as a man of nature very naturally. Nowadays... he is not even able to stand up. But his very presence in the campus is making all the difference as an invisible divine power.

Fr. Antony had a stroke and was in the hospital for over 1 ½ months. The children of St. Mary's, teaching and non-teaching faculty were all on their knees praying for Fr.'s recovery. Your prayers were also there. God Almighty is with him. Now he has returned to his beloved St. Mary's. Fr. is paralysed on his left side, but he is able to speak and eat. He cuts jokes, he prays, and sometime he shouts so he is able to direct the things that he wants done. He takes physiotherapy twice a day and attendants are always by his side. A few doctors are kept at his beck and call to observe his blood pressure and sugar levels. Rev. Father is very happy to be back at his beloved St. Mary's and he blesses the children when they call on him.

Rev. Father was very particular in conducting morning Masses regularly in St. Mary's. The students also found the Masses to be a blessing. The former and present students are testifying accordingly. Now, Holy communion Mass is being celebrated every first Tuesday in St. College of Education and on every first Friday in St. Xavier Nursing College.

All the three schools, Madha Higher Secondary School for the Handicapped, Madha High School for the Deaf-Mute and St. Antony's Matriculation Higher Secondary School have just finished their common mid-term tests. They are preparing for the common half-yearly examinations. Madha School Children were given Deepavali gifts. (Deepavali is celebrated as a festival of light, villagers and urban dwellers in Tamil Nadu are equally happy on this day). St. Mary's children were given Deepavali dresses. They expressed their happiness in receiving them. We are experiencing unusual cold during night hours. In order to help the children protect from cold, they were given Sholapur bed sheets. The children observe strict study hours both in the morning and evening as well as prayer hours. Teachers keep a vigil over them.

By the efforts of Madha High School for the Deaf-Mute, 21 hearing-aids were distributed to St. Mary's children as the first installment. The remaining eligible children will also be given hearing aids shortly.

The management and the faculty are very particular in encouraging the nursing studies. The spirit of sacrifice in the nursing profession is all the time recognized. The nursing students are taking their practical part of their studies, clinical postings, rural postings very sincerely. St. Xavier School and College of Nursing have been producing centum results both in GNM and B.Sc(N). They have full admissions. Placement is also near total. Shortly, there will be arising vacancies in the Government hospitals and other Government sectors for them. They are performing with all sacrificial fervour. They are whole-heartedly assisting all the Government sponsored schemes. Please pray for our nursing students and also for all the Madha Group of Educational Institutions.

We pray for all of you...our benefactors and your family members. Thanking you and Yours in Jesus,
I. Mariaselvam (Correspondence and Head Master of St. Mary's)

Christmas 2016 Newsletter from Fr. Rafael - Ecuador (MGHM)

Dear kind friends and benefactors:

I am sure you remember the tragedy that the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother have suffered in Ecuador in the past months. Due to heavy rain on April 12, 2016 unexpected flooding was provoked in the Playa Prieta area, Manabi, Ecuador. The flooding, which reached over a meter and a half, caused serious damage to the school: doors, seats, tables and closets, school materials, classroom walls, recently painted; humidity damaged many things. All the classrooms, the chapel, the playground etc. were covered with mud knee high.

This scene was quiet desolating, given that the new school year was about to begin. The Sisters spent the entire week working hard, trying to at least clean and fix the classroom areas. They also helped the local families heavily affected by the flooding. The situation for these families was devastating. During that week "Help the Helpless" were our consolation as your help permitted us to aid the families and ease their burdens.

Yet the worst was yet to come. At 18:58 on Saturday, April 16, at sun down, a 7.8 earthquake destroyed Holy Family's main school four story building. The result, as you know, was that one sister and five young candidates died under the rubble and also the school's installations were completely ruined.

At this moment in time, eight months after this terrible earthquake, despite the fact that the buildings have not yet been fully reconstructed, the school is up and running to its maximum capacity. It has been admirable the confidence the student's parents have placed in us. They were in their right to look for another school for their children so as to secure their education. However, the great majority of the parents have preferred to assume the inconvenience of the construction works at the school during these months rather than lose their child's place at the school. This gesture, far more powerful than words, shows the excellent work that our Sisters are carrying out at the school.

The Sisters are provisionally living in a house lent to them by a neighbor. It is not an ideal situation for the community, yet the Sisters accept this sacrifice out of the love they have for the students to whom they have wished to give first priority. It is very edifying to see how the Sisters out do themselves working, side by side with the construction, to prepare and teach their lessons and attend to the families in the local area, families that have suffered much and are in great need. The Sisters tell many wonderful stories of how grateful these simple people are, and if I were to tell you all these details, this letter— which is already far too long— would become a book of grateful memories.

So that you can have an idea of the good that we have been able to do, thanks to your help, below I have written an overall scheme that shows how your donations were used:

- An immediate emergency flooding relief donation that allows us to help hundreds of people.
- We are able to sponsor 103 school scholarships, and 50 sponsored families that receive a food basket every month.
- We have helped to: reconstruct houses, construct bamboo houses, carry out land improvement at Holy Family School, purchase construction material for the school wall, purchase material needed for the construction of the school bar and the secretary office. -We have helped families by giving them mattresses, domestic devices (cookers, refrigerators) food, milk, medicine, water, and basic needs...
- With the donations received for wells, we have built a well in Playa Prieta and in Chone.
- The purchase of catechism material and bibles, for evangelization with the youth and families.
- The Maria Elisabette Farm: we have started with the fishponds of "Chames." The purification and water channeling has been carried out. On October 5, a stock of 40,000 Chame fish was introduced into one of the ponds.

- Soup Kitchens: presently we are feeding 200 children in the three soup kitchens in Chone. In these same soup kitchens, we also feed a number of elderly. This month we will open a new soup kitchen in the Isla Trinitaria area (Guayaquil) that will offer a daily meal (Monday through Sunday) to 100 children. It will be necessary to employ two cooks. For many of these children, it will be their only daily meal.

- Women's Help Center: continues to advice and support women who are likely to have an abortion. The great majority of them feel pressured to abort due to their economic situation.

- Sanitarian Help: the purchase of medicines and milk for families that are unable to buy these items.

Once again, many thanks to all of you for all this help. There are no words that can describe our deep gratitude for all the help you have given and continue to give. This Christmas Pope Francis asks us to contemplate the child Jesus in the manger. He says that "his face reflects the goodness, the mercy and the love of God the Father"(24 December, 2016). It causes me great joy to think with how much love the child Jesus will look upon you this Christmas after having heard, during these past months, the thankful messages from our Sisters, students, and the needy for all the benefits they received through your generosity.

May the Lord and Our Heavenly Mother bless and protect you.

With my blessings,

Fr. Rafael Alonso Reymund (President and Founder of the Missionary Group of the Home of the Mother (MGHM))

Christmas 2016 Newsletter from Sr. Mercedes Ramos Gómez (Superior of the Community of Sisters in Playa Prieta Ecuador)

Dear loving friends from Help the Helpless:

When we first heard about you in February 2015 learning about all the help that you have been giving in India, as well as your openness towards the Home of the Mother missionary work in Ecuador, I would never have imagined that we would be in as much need of your help as we are. This seems so providential to me, and I think that God Himself has put you in our path. The needs we have provided for during these past 14 years of ministry here have been many, but it is true that with the flooding and the earthquake on April 16, 2016, these needs have been multiplied, and thanks to you, so many families, children, youth, sick persons... have been alleviated in the midst of their spiritual and human sufferings.

Playa Prieta was desolate, without its school and church, so many houses destroyed, fear, despair, everyone in the area was terrified; without moral hope to start over again and without recourses...

We started the help outreach when the floodwaters subsided, prior to the earthquake. Although the school was still completely flooded and full of mug knee high, the Sisters, forgetting about themselves, began to handout provisions to the families most affected. Immediately after the earthquake, we received endless provisions of water, clothes and food relief.

After the death of our Sisters and engaged with the recovery of the survivors, when everybody thought that we, Sisters, would no longer return to Playa Prieta, given that everything was destroyed, there was only rubble left; two sisters, based in Chone, made daily trips to Playa Prieta to work there and try to recover possible books, tables, chairs... and to be with the community which had also suffered greatly, and continue to suffer due to continuous tremors and the second earthquake that again created great fear.

At the end of June we formed a community of three sisters in a house very close to the school that a generous lady lent us, she went to live with her sister. We continue to listen, encourage, identify needs and work with endeavor for each and everyone in the community.

Along side the reconstruction of the school perimeter wall, the Sisters carried out school enrollment and food and aid outreach to the community. Also, the Sisters see special needs that families might have, if families have lost their houses, they offer them bamboo houses.

We wrote an article entitled "The Revolution of Love" that tells the experience we have had after the earthquake. In June we started the school year, but we did not have any classrooms where we could receive the students, neither were there bathrooms nor sufficient tables and chairs... there was nothing at all, physically speaking, yet the strength and confidence in Our Lady, who has always been and continues to be the centre of our school, were so strong that we received the students and parents anyway. The students' response was very impressive indeed, 98% of our students enrolled in these conditions. The parents and students said the following: "we prefer to wait a year rather than enroll in another school.", "if the Sisters are warriors and fight for us, then we will trust in them.", "for me, return to my school is return to my home."

We have been happily teaching class under palm trees that God's creation has given us, amidst dust, trucks, rocks, machines... It also strengthens us, Sisters, the children's smiles, their confidence in us, and especially our community in heaven: Sr. Clare, Valeria, Catalina, Mayra, Jazmina and Ma Augusta, if they have given their all here, including their lives, we too are willing give ourselves completely to our mission here.

At this present time, many things have changed thanks to you and to many, many others who have collaborated with us and who have felt moved to help raise up our school again. We already have 15 bamboo classrooms which have flooring and are painted... we have a sports court where the children can do sports, we have mass every week..., bathrooms, we are on the point of finishing two brick classrooms for Kindergarten, and have started to build the library, teachers' lounge and computer lab.

Here's something very special: we are building the school chapel where our Sisters died. We want the chapel to be the centre of the school, and our wish is that much glory be given to God there, that he be loved by all who enter its doors. We are hoping that it will be ready by Christmas, we want to receive Christ, King of the universe and King of our hearts in a worthy way there this Christmas.

The students with scholarships and the sponsored families are very grateful for your help; your monthly donations mean a lot. We, on their behalf, wish to thank you.

"Give freely that which you have freely received", we are receiving SO MUCH, no matter how much we give, we will always be in debt.

Heartfelt thanks, please know that you are in our prayers during this special season of grace. May the Lord Jesus, so rich in love and who desires to be loved, fill you with His grace and blessings, may he grant you your deepest desires, and may our Heavenly Mother keep you close to Her heart.

Happy Christmas from Playa Prieta!

Sr. Mercedes Ramos Gómez - Servant Sister of the Home of the Mother (Superior of the Community of Sisters in Playa Prieta Ecuador)