



It is always the same Christ who says: ... I was homeless - not only for a shelter made of bricks - but for a heart that understands, that cares, that loves. ~ Mother Teresa

January 2003

Dear Friend,

As many of you already know I was privileged to make a "reverse mission pilgrimage" to Haiti in June of 2002. **The experience of Haiti is overwhelming!** The degree of poverty and malnutrition, the lack of health care and the unsanitary conditions are impossible to describe. God commands us to "love our neighbor as ourselves" and yet I ask myself, "How, in the face of such overwhelming misery, can I show love for my neighbors in Haiti?"

Haiti, you may not know, is only a couple of hours away from the United States – 600 miles from Miami. Literally the people of Haiti are our neighbors, sitting on our doorstep, like the poor man Lazarus from the Gospels. Although we know poverty in our own country, the depth and magnitude of the poverty here doesn't begin to compare with the absolute poverty I found in Haiti. Most Haitians must live on incomes of less than \$100 a year! Many children are orphaned or homeless or come from families that are just too poor to provide even the basic necessities of food and clothing. Hunger is real in Haiti and most children suffer with chronic malnutrition and the diseases that accompany persistent hunger. The staple foods are beans and rice. Health care is largely unavailable to most Haitians. There is no free public education. Illiteracy is the norm. Only the Churches make an effort to provide social services to these brothers and sisters, neighbors to us. But the Churches of Haiti are also desperately poor!

How can I help these brothers and sisters? How can WE help them? What could we possibly do to make a difference in the face of such overwhelming misery? Mother Theresa once said that the only way she can deal with poverty, death, and suffering is by helping God's children "one at a time". After visiting the parish of St. Louis de Montfort and meeting Fr. Nicolas Gerard, the pastor there, I think I know one way that we can put this principle into practice!

The parish of St. Louis de Montfort operates in the slums outside of Port au Prince, the capital city of Haiti. I've been there. I've seen the work of Fr. Nicolas and his associates, Sr. Helen Ryder and Sr. Eileen Davey, both Sisters of the Holy Union. In particular I was excited about a "head start" program begun by Sr. Eileen that provides early education and a nutritious meal each day to pre-schoolers in the parish who are "at risk" of severe malnutrition because their families are simply too poor to provide for them.

Would you consider giving up the cost of a lunch one day a month – just \$5 – to help these children have a good meal every day? You can "**Skip a Lunch, Save a Child!**" I won't ask for more. Many people may not be able to pledge more, but almost everyone can pledge \$5 a month. If enough of us skip lunch once a month, together we can make a difference in the lives of these children and give encouragement to the workers who are helping to care for them. Not only will our efforts benefit these "poorest of the poor", but we will have the satisfaction that we aren't standing idly by doing nothing while our brothers and sisters, our neighbors outside our doorstep, go hungry.

There is no expense related to this sponsorship program. Every penny I collect will go directly to this project – to benefit the children. Sr. Eileen and Fr. Nicolas are committed to using the monies I gather only for meeting the needs of these children. At least once each year we will send an update on the program to all our sponsors with pictures of the children who are being cared for with our contributions. ***Won't you skip a lunch with me this month and every month? Won't you join with me in this effort to help the children of Haiti?***

Through the sponsorship of *Partners in Progress* and its *Rich in Mercy Mission Institute* program, the program which made it possible for me to go to Haiti in the first place, your donations are tax deductible. ***Make your check payable to "Partners in Progress" and put "Rich in Mercy" in the memo line.*** You can make your contributions monthly or annually or make a one-time donation towards this program. Just complete the form below, tear it off, and send it to the address indicated. ***Skip lunch with me. Together we can save a child!***

God promises that He will never be outdone in giving: "Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over!" (Luke 6:38).

Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a difference in the lives of poor children! Please remember this work in your prayers!

Sincerely yours in the Love of Christ,
Marlene Shaw