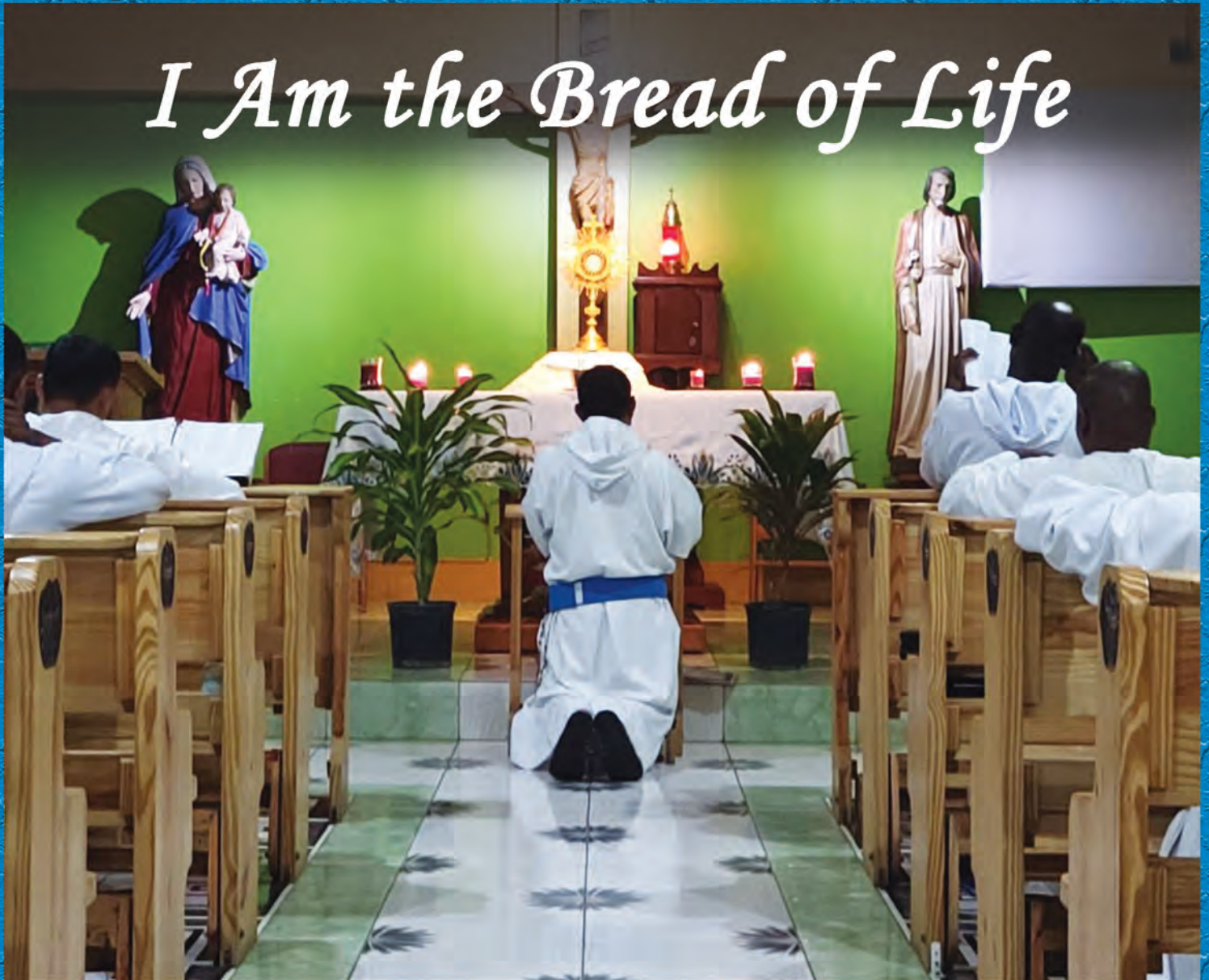


MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR



Newsletter Advent/Christmas 2023

I Am the Bread of Life



ALSO

- **Vocation Story**



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Newsletter 2023

“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)

For this Advent, I would like us to reflect on some powerful thoughts of our Holy Father Pope Francis on the Eucharist, symbolized by the bread we receive in holy communion.

When Jesus said “*I am the bread of life,*” the crowds that gathered around him had just witnessed the multiplication of the loaves. They had witnessed God’s superabundant generosity, His concern for His children, who became brothers and sisters in the sharing of bread.

Something had changed. For a few moments, those thirsting and silent people who followed Jesus in search of a word, were able to touch with their hands and feel in their bodies the miracle of a togetherness capable of satisfying superabundantly.

Jesus is the Living Bread come down from heaven, who tells us: “*Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*”

All those people discovered that hunger for bread has other names too: hunger for God, hunger for brotherhood, hunger for encounter. Pope Francis passionately declares on our behalf:

“*Lord, we are hungry for the bread of your word, which can open our narrow-mindedness and our loneliness. We are hungry, Lord, for an experience of unity*



“*Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*”

All that the Lord asks of us is that we come: to set out and go forth. He urges us to draw near to Him so as to become sharers in His life and mission.

“*Come,*” He says. For the Lord, that does not mean simply moving from one place to another. Instead, it means letting ourselves be moved and transformed by His word, in our choices, our feelings and

in which indifference, dishonor and disgrace will not spoil our tables or take pride of place in our homes. We are hungry, Lord, for encounters where your word can raise hope, awaken tenderness, and sensitize our hearts by opening paths of transformation and conversion.

We are hungry, Lord, to experience, like those crowds, the multiplication of your mercy, which can break down our stereotypes and communicate your compassion for each person, especially those for whom no one cares: the forgotten and despised.”

We have grown in understanding the Lord’s command:

priorities, daring in this way to adopt His own way of acting and speaking. Pope Francis says, “*For His is the language of bread that speaks of tenderness, companionship, generous dedication to others, the language of a love that is concrete and tangible, because it is daily and real.*”

In every Eucharist, the Lord breaks and shares himself. He invites us to break and share ourselves together with Him, and to be part of that miraculous multiplication that desires to reach out and touch, with tenderness and compassion.

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MOP Christmas Message 2023



Christmas time is a time of remembrance and celebration. We remember the birth of a little child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger and we rejoice and celebrate because this little child is Emmanuel, God-with-us. This event is meant to fill us with great hope not amnesia. How easy it is in the joy and festivities of Christmas to forget? My dear friends, and MOP associates, the Eucharistic celebration of Christmas and the festive activities, which are all worthy of being enjoyed must not make us forget the situation in which the world lives. If we do forget and do not let the events of the past year influence the way in which we celebrate, then we are like ostriches, hiding our heads in the sand, until of course, disaster strikes close to home.

What are we called to remember? We are called to remember the invasion of Ukraine and the war between Ukraine and Russia. We are called to remember the war between Hamas and Israel

and the many killed and maimed innocent civilians, many of them children. We are called to remember innocent civilians and children killed because of gun violence in many of our countries. We are called to remember those whose lives were snuffed out in road accidents and those who lost everything because of flooding. The list can go on and on.

It is tempting to ask, why remember these distressing statistics in this season of cheer and good will? We must remember if we are to apply the Gospel message of this feast to the concrete situations that we live, so that we can let the Christmas message enlighten and transform us. The first reading of the midnight Eucharistic celebration of Christmas reminds us of the vision of the prophet Isaiah; *"The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light, on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone."* I know that it can and will be said that things are not as bad as they seem. There is much for which we have to thank Almighty God. In spite of natural disasters we are alive; the pandemic seems to be over and war has not struck our land. That is all true, but we could be thanking God for much much more. I also wonder if the parents, family and friends of those who have lost babies, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers are seeing much for which to thank God.

In the midst of what can only be described as a dark period

in history, as the prophet Isaiah predicted, If we are willing to see *"a light has shone upon us."* God has sent his Son into the world so that our eyes may be opened for us to see the way to the happiness which we seek. That is why the good news given to the shepherds in the fields over two thousand years ago resonates in our hearts today and fills us with hope. *"Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord."*



The Annunciation by Paolo de Matteis

The celebration of Christmas reminds us that we have the solution to all the problems that we face. We have to adopt the values of Jesus Christ, values which are found in the sacred writings of every religion and every Christian denomination.

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Vocation Story

I was brought up in a family of five siblings, I being the second-born of my parents. My father passed away in 2009. During the early years of my youth, I was highly impressed and influenced by the missionary priest who used to come and celebrate house masses, or administer anointing of the sick. I also treasure the examples and teachings I received from my parents, teachers, and even the society at large which all have shaped my vocation as a religious Brother. Although our family was working class, I never considered us to be less fortunate or less blessed by the Lord, because the prayers we shared bound us together as one family.

As a boy, I used to assist weekly at mass at the nearby outstation. It was at this time that I developed a strong desire to devote my life exclusively to the service of God and his people as a religious missionary. However, I had not known nor heard of any missionary congregation in my area; all I knew was the missionary priest who used to say mass for us, and the nuns who used to run the hospital in the vicinity.



First and Final Vows of MOP sisters and MOP Brothers

For quite a long time, I kept this desire in my heart and prayed and reflected upon it. I did not reveal it to anybody, not even my parents. For whatever reason, my friends used to encourage me to serve the Lord in the only way they knew: either priesthood or sisterhood; no one knew about the missionary Brothers.

It was in the year 2012 when I came to know about a religious family of Brothers called Missionaries of the Poor (MOP). I got to know them through brochures I received from the parish priest who was giving me spiritual guidance about my vocation. The MOP Brothers had come to my parish on a vocations campaign and left their brochures. Upon reading through it, I was inspired by their way of life, even though I had never heard of the Brothers before.

Under the guidance of my parish priest, I wrote an application letter to the vocations director, and after two weeks I was invited to their *Come and See* programme for three days.

By January 2013, I joined the new intake at Our Lady Good Counsel Monastery in Kampala, Uganda. My religious journey to become an MOP has not been without its challenges and even doubts, but the Lord has never failed me in His divine assistance.

My vocation is something that I entirely attribute to God's gratuitous gift to me, for I am aware of my unfitness for this noble vocation. But the Lord, in his mysterious ways, has consecrated and sent me to work in His vineyard by serving Him and His people and I am grateful to Him for this vocation he has given to me. I am also very grateful to my parents who nurtured me in the faith, and to my siblings who have always loved me; my friends too, through whom God has used to bring my dream to fulfilment, and my dear spiritual family of the Missionaries of the Poor.

**Br. Benedict Mutava MOP
Jesus Redeemer Monastery
Kingston, Jamaica**

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Hunger for bread, hunger for fraternity, hunger for God. How well St Teresa of Kolkata knew this, and desired to build her life on the twin pillars of Jesus incarnate in the Eucharist and Jesus incarnate in the poor - love received and love given! Two inseparable pillars that marked her journey and kept her moving, eager also to quench her own hunger and thirst.

She went to the Lord exactly as she went to the despised, the unloved, the lonely and the forgotten. In drawing near to her brothers and sisters, she found the face of the Lord, for she knew, as Pope Francis says *"that love of God and love of neighbour become one: in the least of the brethren, we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God. And that love alone was capable of satisfying her hunger."*

This Advent, let us encourage one another to get up and experience the abundance of God's love. Let us allow God to satisfy our hunger and thirst: in the sacrament of the altar and in the sacrament of our brothers and sisters.

Fr Hayden Augustine MOP
Our Lady of Visitation Monastery
Nairobi, Kenya



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Our problem is the problem described by John the Evangelist in the prologue to the gospel. *"He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him."* The question for each one of us then is this; have I accepted Jesus? Have I made the values and the vision of Jesus my own?

My dear friends, the acceptance of Jesus brings with it certain obligations. As Jesus the Son was sent by the Father into the world to be a *"light shining in the darkness"*, so the acceptance of Jesus, carries with it the recognition that we too have been sent to ensure that; *"the light continues to shine in the darkness."*

My dear friends, the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us *"In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors*

through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son," God however continues to speak to us today and cries out to us in the tears of mothers and fathers, sons and daughters who bear the anguish of the loss of their loved ones. God calls on us, those of us who frequent the sacraments, those of us who consider ourselves authentic disciples and good Christians, God calls on us to believe in his name and be *"light shining in the darkness"* which seems to envelop so much around us. It is only through our lives that Emmanuel, God-with-us, will walk our land. It is only through our lives that real hope will be given to our people.

I urge you therefore to be light to those who walk in the darkness of despair because their lives have been traumatized by vehicular accidents, violent crime, the murder of loved ones, and the

abuse of children. Over this Christmas season strive to be bearers of hope to them so that the message of peace may touch their hearts. This season of good will to all demands that we actively and profoundly share this good will. Let us not be ostriches hiding our heads in the sand, let us be disciples hearing the message of Christmas and taking it to the farthest corners of our land, especially to those who think that they have no reason to hope.

To all of you then I wish a happy holy and productive Christmas season and be bearers of hope to those who see no reason to hope.

Most Rev. Joseph Harris, C.S.Sp.
Pontifical Commissary
Missionaries of the Poor.

As the holiday season unfolded, December 14, 2023, became a day of warmth, compassion, and joy for a group of individuals who often find themselves on the margins of society. The Missionaries of the Poor Brothers along with associates and friends at Charles Street in Kingston, Jamaica, radiated warmth, joy and orchestrated a special event that prepared gifts and meals to friends facing homelessness. This transformed an ordinary day into an extraordinary celebration, filled with kindness, fellowship, and the true spirit of Christmas.

As MOP Brothers, our commitment to serving the marginalized is deeply rooted in our faith. Taking the lead in organizing this event was our way of living out the teachings of Jesus Christ and



Our friends entering Jesus Redeemer Monastery

spreading His love during the holiday season. Gathering at the Charles Street Jesus Redeemer Monastery with our dedicated volunteers, there was a palpable sense of excitement and shared purpose. We were reminded of Matthew 25:35-36: *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was*



Br. Joel MOP delivering his Christmas message to the people

I was in prison and you came to visit me." This location became a symbol of unity and a hub for spreading goodwill, mirroring the biblical call to serve those in need.

Armed with bags filled with Christmas treats and essentials, we played a crucial role in ensuring that our event provided more than just physical sustenance. Our carefully

chosen gifts included hot meals, beverages, and gift bags with hygiene items, inspired by the biblical principles of generosity and compassion found in Luke 6:38: *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* Our involvement went beyond mere charity; it became a heartfelt expression of compassion, creating real connections and understanding. We were guided by Galatians 6:2: *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."* Our presence added a

spiritual touch to the event, emphasizing the importance of love and empathy in addressing the challenges faced by our friends in the homeless community.

During the distribution of gifts, we engaged in heartfelt conversations with our friends, sharing stories and offering a compassionate ear. Our

dedication to providing both material and emotional support created an atmosphere of shared humanity, going beyond the struggles faced by those living on the streets. In addition to the tangible gifts, we organized a beautiful performance by the Brothers, filling the air with timeless Christmas carols. The music, combined with our dedication, added joy and festivity to the occasion, creating lasting memories for everyone involved. As the day came to a close, we MOP Brothers, reflected on the profound impact of our collective efforts.



MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR



Newsletter

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September 8, 2023 on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, four MOP Brothers took their perpetual vows.

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Br. Jerome MOP distributes gifts to the people

In conclusion, the Christmas treat for people on the streets on December 14, 2023, was not just a display of goodwill but a reflection of our MOP Brothers' commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of our friends. Our generosity in providing both gifts and meals elevated the event, turning it into a symbol of hope and a reminder that the true spirit of Christmas lies in giving selflessly and reaching out with compassion. May our life of dedicated joyful service to the least of our brothers and sisters, guided by faith and scripture, inspire others to join in, creating a ripple effect of kindness and generosity in communities around the world.



MOP Brothers, Associates and UWI students distribute food packages to the people

Br. Roger Loremia, MOP
St. Oscar Romero House of Studies
Kingston, Jamaica

MERRY CHRISTMAS

FROM OUR MOP FAMILY



A Perfect Gift For
Christmas: Caribbean Christmas CD
 get your copies now and
 help us Feed the Poor.

A Child is born for us



MOP Brothers distribute Christmas gifts to the people.

MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR

Help us improve our Food Management

Enclosed is my gift _____ in support of the installation of
 innovative cold storage units at Mt. Tabor and Corpus Christi Monasteries in Kingston.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone: Cell _____ (H) _____ (W)

E-mail _____

Signature _____ Date _____

