

MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR



Newsletter Lent/Easter 2024

Love your enemies!



ALSO

- Let the little children come to me!
- Death to life



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Love your enemies!

"A new commandment I give you....." John 13:34

"Love your enemies....." Matthew 5:43

To love my enemies means to forgive them. I have to put aside my anger and hatred, cancel my plans for revenge. I have to destroy the division, bridge the gap between me and my enemy. I have to forego the doubt and mistrust, cast them aside, those enemies of the peace which I desire for my heart.

Hate poisons peace. I become restless, physically and mentally sick, sleepless, my conscience hardens. War is raging inside me, I am not myself, a demon is roaming within my soul.

The devil is a hater. But I was made for love, love that brings joy and happiness. Hatred sows sadness, causes me to curse and writhe with anguish and that looming sense of loss and brokenness. A festering wound aches my heart and sears my soul, making me miserable, driving me almost to despair.

To hate is such a strange thing. Oftentimes my enemy was once my friend. An unexpected wrong turn occurred in a relationship that was once happy and healthy. Worst enemies were once best friends, intimate friends, knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses, sharing each other's deepest secrets.

Strangers are like aliens to me.



How can I hate someone I do not know? Rather, I hate someone who has hurt and disappointed me, betrayed and misjudged me, misunderstood and mocked me.

Spousal relationships that go sour produce some of the worse enemies, sometimes mortal: love birds become venomous vipers, turning a happy home into a horror house!

Colleagues and co-workers become bitter rivals because only one is praised, his pay is raised, and his promotion inflicts the final death blow to a brotherly bond. One's pride is wounded by jealousy and envy, gossip and insults.

Who are my enemies? Who has become my nemesis?

Lent is a season of soul-searching, retreat and reflection, making the journey

within, discovering the desert that has invaded my heart. There's dryness, an aridity that saps all my emotional and spiritual energies. I am lost and lonely, wasted by my sins against love.

Christ restores love and life with the grace of forgiveness he reclaimed on the Cross, that Cross on which he suffered the worse hatred any man could ever experience: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Luke 23:34

This Lent, help me Lord to practice the art of forgiveness and to learn once more how to love my enemies.

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

Christmas Prison Ministry: “Mother of all MOP Treats”

It was a stirring experience for many MOP Brothers and Associates to visit the **Tower Street Adult Correctional Centre** after a break of four years. As we entered the premises, we were warmly welcomed by the prison wardens who escorted us through several check-points, eventually reaching an open area where many inmates were gathered. We were also greeted by prisoners standing outside their multi-storied cell-blocks shouting “*Fr Ho Lung, Fr Ho Lung!*” They waved wildly and smiled broadly as we marched to the hall where the activities were held. There, we were all aghast when we were confronted by the inscription **No One Shall Escape** boldly emblazoned on the central wall of the hall.

Visiting the imprisoned is one of the *corporal works of mercy* in our Church, and has been a foundational MOP ministry – “*the mother of all our outreach*



ministries.” As a Jesuit, Fr Ho Lung often visited the prisons, accompanied by St. George’s College students and teachers. He spent much time listening to the prisoners, consoling them, giving them hope that when they completed their sentences, they would return to society as transformed men. Since then, MOP Brothers and Associates have been regularly visiting

various correctional facilities in Jamaica and in many of our overseas missions.

In the Church’s Advent and Christmas seasons, there is much visitation. In the first chapter of the gospel of St. Luke, Mary visited her elderly, pregnant cousin Elizabeth, rushing in haste to share her joy with Elizabeth. These festive seasons invited us to share the joy we received from the Lord as we anticipated and celebrated his birth. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we are called to be instruments of joy to all whom we meet in our daily lives. Thus, last December, as part of our annual Christmas celebrations, we visited three **Correctional Centres** – Tower Street for Men, and the two Correctional Centres on South Camp Road - one for Women, and the other for Juveniles.



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“Give them something to eat yourselves”



What one can reflect during this Christmas is the true love Jesus shares to all those who come to Him. As a Missionary of the Poor, every day is an invitation to journey with Jesus who calls us to give something to those who are hungry, and Christmas is that season where each of us is called to do something for someone.

Even though most of us might consider Christmas to be a season of abundance of food and drink, it is important to remember that it's not the same with everybody. There is someone in the street who might be longing to have a little of even that food you want to throw away.

Personally, I witnessed this when we gave a Christmas treat to 300 homeless adult men and women from the streets of Kingston. It was a faith-filled event to see how they were all grateful for

whatever they got. The event started with a gathering in our St. Ephrem Chapel. Bro. Ronel MOP sang melodiously while Bro. Rudy MOP and other Brothers played music that ignited in them the Jamaican spirit of praise and worship, allowing them to be attentive to the gospel of the day that was shared by Bro. Fidelis MOP. He

spoke about the Annunciation that teaches us that nothing is impossible for God. The miracle of the Virgin Birth assures them that He could provide for everyone without cost.

All these were our people who come to us weekly for their package of rice and beans. However at Christmas they always come with greater excitement to experience the joy of Christmas giving and receiving, even to receive a bar of soap, toiletries and a bathing rag. Mrs. Valerie, our veteran associate once again took delight in diligently preparing a feast of baked chicken, rice and peas, pastas and salads which she and other local volunteers lovingly served our people.



Br. Fidel shares his gospel reflection with people.

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“Let the little children come to me!”

Even though they live in the ghetto, their simplicity and innocence cannot be mistaken for a fraud. Children are always simple despite what a complex and confuse world tries to force on them. I witnessed this truth last Christmas when the Brothers prepared a treat for 400 Kington inner-city children.

We used to serve over a 1,000 children in two locations here in Kingston before Covid-19. But it has been a little difficult to gather that number after the pandemic. One reason is that many are still unaware that churches have reopened. Moreover, the help we got pre-Covid has not yet returned. For instance, the toys we gave to the children arrived from our friends in Australia just a few days before the treat.

The event started by gathering the children in the chapel and Brothers were ready with carols and other *Praise and Worship* songs. That was followed by a



homily and a blessing by Fr. Max MOP. He asked them what was the meaning of Christmas to which a few of them answered correctly.

It was amazing to see how attentive they all were though they were so young - between five to

twelve years. Once the prayers were over, we proceeded to have dancing competitions and parlor games. It was such a delight to see these little boys and girls express their talents so freely.

Though I was worried that not all the children would get a Christmas gift, to my surprise each got a gift, a plate of food and drinks which brought smiles on all their faces.



On leaving through the gate each child offered a big thank you to the Brothers, their young faces beaming with gratitude and happiness and a feeling of contentment and purpose that rang true. My prayer is that this year God will fill us with more zeal to reach out to many families, and that all our friends will be touched to provide something for these little ones on this most special day of their lives.

Br. James Kullu, MOP
Sacred Heart Monastery
Kingston, Jamaica



Death to Life

In venturing to Kingston, Jamaica, I brought with me 46 years of experience with Special Needs individuals and my spirituality of my seventy-two years of living. Initially it was overwhelming seeing so many special needs individuals in one space. In the beginning I observed what was going on in each center. After a few minutes I began shaking hands and telling them my name and asking them theirs. I quickly found out who the verbal and non-verbal individuals were. Each center was somewhat different. Everyday adjustments needed to be made. Many times during the two week period, when I arrived at the particular center I would gravitate to the most involved individuals. The younger residents at times were in their bed. As I approached them, I would start speaking to them and use stimulation technique with them. Most responded with a smile.

Another experience which was awesome was the Sunday masses at Bethlehem Chapel where the community members as well as the residents were fully and actively participating in the entire Mass. The singing, swaying, hand-clapping and offertory procession were heavenly.

I was involved with the following tasks while at the centers: shaving, cutting hair, feeding, dancing with the residents, changing sheets, sweeping, swabbing the floor, praying the Rosary with the



Richard visits Mount Beatitudes Home for children

group, playing ball, etc.

Rarely do we see a group of men such as the MOP Brothers smiling and being happy almost all the time. They are very loving towards each other as well as to the staff, volunteers and the residents. Their smiles are infectious. You can tell that the staff members enjoy working with the residents. It is written all over their faces.

It was important for me not to compare Jamaica to America. The United States has many sources of funding to support their programs, while MOP main source of funding comes from local and foreign donors.

The prayer life of the MOP Brothers is invaluable in maintaining their positive attitude about life and the demeanor they have with one another, staff, residents and volunteers. It was essential for me to follow their daily prayer life.

On a couple of occasions, the volunteers had the opportunity to share with the Brothers. My sharing was very different from the rest of the group. If MOP did not exist all of the residents in the centers would have died a long time ago.

They could not survive on the streets. The Missionaries of the Poor are with their charisms are extremely important in opening our eyes to the needs of the poor.

I pray that the good Lord grants me good health in the future to be able to return with a few more volunteers from my area.



**Richard Boisvert
South Carolina, USA**

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These were visitations brimming with joy as gifts were exchanged, food and drinks were served, and music, dance and drama were performed by Brothers and inmates, filling us all with a happiness that only the Lord can give. Some inmates told moving stories about their lives; some sang and expressed their happiness in seeing us Brothers and friends once again coming to be with them to share God's love for them.

The prophet Isaiah in chapter 61 talks about the Messiah who will come to be among his people: *"The spirit of the Lord is upon me; for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; to set the oppressed free, to open the eyes of the blind, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."*

Two thousand years ago, Christ came to rescue us from the



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Br. Wilson MOP distributes Christmas presents to the children



slavery of sin. Today this mission of proclaiming his good news continues in the lives of many missionaries who leave their countries to serve the least of our brothers and sisters in distant lands.

Matthew's gospel, chapter 25:30-46, describes the Last Judgment. When Christ comes again, he will judge us according to our treatment of the most forgotten ones in our world. *"I was in prison and you visited me,"* shows clearly that Jesus is in the prisoner who waits for us. He has a special love for those souls in danger of perishing, for the most vulnerable amongst us.

We thank the Superintendents of all three Correctional Facilities for allowing us this unique opportunity to once again meet and greet our incarcerated brothers and sisters. We are grateful for the tremendous hospitality and trust they have shown MOP over the years. We also thank our friends, associates, and benefactors who contributed so much to make these events successful. And we look forward to visiting soon again to share the love and glory of God to all His children.

Br. Alfonzo Mutembei MOP
Jesus the Redeemer Monastery
Kingston, Jamaica

Indeed, the words of Christ to his disciples, *"Give them something to eat yourselves"* (Mark 6:37) became true when we saw a smile on an old man's face clutching his Christmas gift in one hand and a plate of food and drinks in the other. You can hear them wishing Bro. James Kullu MOP, *"Thank you Brother and happy Christmas!"* In all these

events every Brother giving a small gift to the poor is reminded that he is consecrated to serve and to be Christ in this world.

Br. Fidelis Rukundu, MOP
Jesus Redeemer Monastery
Kingston, Jamaica



Most Rev. Joseph Harris and the Missionaries of the Poor Brothers visit the Holy Father Pope Francis.

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MISSIONARIES OF THE POOR

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