

Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions

Newsletter

November 2024



Mission trips change lives.

By: Colette Jemmings

Mission trips change lives.

The lives of those who are served, as well as those doing the serving, are profoundly impacted and touched by God through the corporal works of mercy performed.

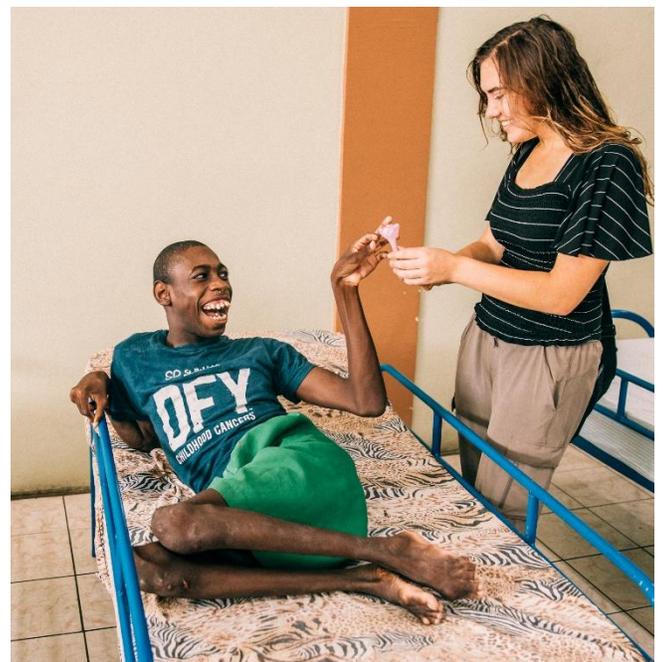
It was both an honor and a privilege to serve the children of Jamaica.

When you think of an orphanage in the slums of Kingston, beds lined rows upon rows with disabled and malnourished children, it seems like such a sad place. But it was the exact opposite.

I saw love in that orphanage. I saw joy. I saw communion. And I saw God. I saw Him in the efforts of the MOP (Missionaries of the Poor) brothers, as they continue to keep the orphanage up and running. I saw Him in the smiles of these children, as they lit up when you'd play with them or tend to their needs. Their purity and joy alongside their suffering and ailments is the most inspiring thing to behold. Joy through the suffering.

I had the opportunity to go with the Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions down to Jamaica October 2023. Their mission is to build sustainable programs that provide therapy services to hundreds of children and adults with disabilities at the MOP apostolates in Jamaica.

Spending time at the orphanage, there were two encounters that profoundly impacted my life. The first time we met the children was when we arrived at the orphanage for Mass. The brothers brought the children in and there was one boy that came and sat in our pew. Some of the other missionaries were giggling and I turned to see why. Here he had this little wilted pink flower in his hand. He would put the flower up to his nose, giving the biggest inhale in, and following was the loudest sign of absolute bliss and enjoyment. I found it so beautiful how this boy could find so much joy in something the majority of people would simply discard. On the last day at that orphanage, I went outside and picked the most extravagant flower I could find. Giving it to him I started crying because I realized I wanted so badly to give this child the world, but I could only give him a single flower. But to him, this flower meant the world. This interaction taught me the weight of appreciation and how just as St. Therese calls herself the little flower, each person is loved and cherished more than they could possibly imagine.



The second encounter I had was up on a mountain. The boys the brothers were taking care of up there were older and couldn't stay at the orphanage any longer. This experience impacted me deeply because of my photography profession. Here I am

constantly looking at the latest and greatest equipment, frustrated in my day-to-day life of not having the next “best thing.” Then I met this man. He could only use the function of one of his hands and could not walk. In this hand he held a single plank of wood. On his body, he wore tattered clothing, but on his face, he wore the biggest grin imaginable. He would move around the floor saying “say cheese!!!” And would continue to “take our photo” using this block of wood. It brought me to tears the amount of joy a single person could bring to a room.

There were many encounters through my time spent in Jamaica, from the brothers to the children, our bus driver and the other missionaries around me, that have brought me to a more selfless and sacrificial perspective. For the first time in my life, I began to authentically see Christ in others.

I helped in ways that I could, through feeding the homeless to clothing children, but they helped me even more. By being a light in this broken world, these children who seemingly have nothing actually have everything because they are known and loved, by others and by God.

God bless you and God bless Jamaica.



10 Years in Review

By Shannon Hillestad



10 years ago, we began our work at Missionaries of the Poor in Jamaica. 2 of our founding members visited each of their 8 homes for the poor performing needs assessments through the lens of occupational therapists. With nearly every resident having some sort of disability, and there being virtually no therapy programming in place, the needs were high. We were eager to provide our services, and like any good therapist would do, we wrote a list of long-term and short-term goals. Our long-term goals were set for 10 years.

Here we are, 10 years later, and our goals are far from being met. Over the past 10 years, almost nothing has gone according to plan, but it has been clear that God has a plan of his own. His plan has been both *bigger* and *slower* than we envisioned. Isn't that so often the case?

When we first began this work, I envisioned it coming to fruition primarily through me and my efforts. Our goal was to build sustainable therapy programming meaning we would need to train local caregivers to perform the day-to-day work, but who would do the training? Me. Who would fundraise for the staff and materials needed? Me. I was a newly graduated therapist and believed I could do anything. Quickly, I found I was lacking. I lacked knowledge, time, resources, and faith. Thankfully, I had a team of colleagues who worked with me and prayed with me. Then God called us to found the non-profit. This platform has enabled the mission to grow beyond our small influence. In a way, the mission has taken on a life of its own. God is building a foundation for work that I hope will continue beyond me and my small circle of influence.

The work has certainly been slow. We were beginning to build some momentum when the pandemic broke-out and halted all travel for several years. Yet, God worked through this slowness. This was when time allowed us to do the administrative work required in establishing the non-profit. This year, Grant and I welcomed baby Kolbe to our family. Praise God! He is our 4th child. We also began homeschooling our twins more intentionally as they are now in kindergarten. Our home life is so full that it is hard to find time to devote to the mission. Yet working toward our goals slowly in our small pockets of time has allowed space for God

to work in our hearts, so we can be sure our goals are in alignment with His. In all honesty, I often feel discouraged by the slowness. Yet, I trust in Him.

Almost 20 years after my first, life-altering mission trip which led me to my career in occupational therapy and 10 years after we began our work with Missionaries of the Poor, I feel just as much called to this work as ever. I know now that I have no idea how the work will play out in years to come. But whatever happens, I know it will be good. God is building something, in us and through us. I can't wait to see where the next 10 years takes us. God's will be done!



Bethlehem Home Therapy Program

**By: Reverend Brother Peram Prem Sagar
Director of the Bethlehem children's Home
Missionaries of the Poor**

At Bethlehem Home, most of the residents have cerebral palsy and are not able to move without a caregiver moving them. It becomes very challenging for the caregivers, brothers and also volunteers to attend to their needs on a daily basis because they are "stiff."

We gladly welcome Oshene as our physiotherapist who is doing a fantastic job helping these residents meet their milestone. Some are trying to sit up on their own without support. Some are now moving freely without pressuring the muscles. Thanks to Oshene, she dedicated her time and patience working with the residents which most of them has improved.

We are grateful for the humility and serious attention that Oshene gives to our children. Her skills as a therapist help our children to cope with their many challenges. She has endeared herself to them and in turn they show their thankfulness in unique ways.



We need your help!

The Missionaries of the Poor dedicate their lives and service to the Lord to care for the destitute, poor, and needy without compensation. Similarly, our work with Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions is done completely on a volunteer basis. We cannot do this work alone! We are dependent on God's providence made manifest through the kindness and generosity of kind hearted friends and benefactors.

We are hoping to receive enough monthly donors in response to this newsletter to completely cover the position of our therapy provider at Bethlehem Home. This would allow us to expand the therapy programming to more of MOP's homes in Jamaica.

We are also in need of donations to help cover our ongoing efforts to provide wheelchairs to each resident in need. We have had a very difficult time finding donated, used chairs locally, so we have had to resort to shipping used wheelchairs from elsewhere in the country as well as buying new chairs. A “cheap” new chair costs nearly \$1000 after modifications. Shipping cross country as you can imagine, also comes at a significant expense. Any amount you can contribute is greatly appreciated.

We are now accepting payments via Paypal and Venmo. Or you can use the mail-in donation form to send a check or set-up a recurring payments. *Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions is a registered 501©3 organization. Donations are tax-deductible*



venmo

Mail-in Donation Form

Little Flower Catholic Therapy Missions - 507 5th Ave SE, Saint Cloud, MN 56304 - (770)572-7295

Elevating the dignity and quality of life of those living with disabilities across the world.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

I am interested in attending a mission trip.

I would like to make a monthly commitment to building therapy programs.

Prayer requests: _____
