

THE DIVINE MERCY INTERNATIONAL
WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION
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DEAR FRIENDS,

I would like to bring to your notice a project we have been pioneering for some time now. It is a charity project dedicated to the care of widows and orphans of Obike in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, this project began as part of my life-long dream to advocate and work for the welfare of the 'rejects' of the society. In Obike, from where I come, there is the inhuman culture of overlooking the needs of widows. Lands and such similar properties are often communally owned. Yet, rights to such lands and related resources of the community are more often than not, associated with men, so much so that, as soon as a woman's husband dies for whatever reason, she loses, at the same time, every right to those common resources of the community or at best is treated as a second class whose needs are considered, if at all, only when the needs of those whose husbands are still living are met. In addition, living in a country without health care, food stamps, or any kind of provision for the poor and needy, these women, majority of whom are illiterates, find no means of sustenance. For most of them, a meal a day is an exception, while health care is an unaffordable luxury. Esther, as an example, has for over two years now had her womb come out of her birth canal, yet no remedy is in sight. The Best of them are either suffering from one preventable ailment or another, and most of them remain in extreme poverty. Their children are even worse. Besides the ones who have lost both parents, majority of the children do not know the luxury of three square meals a day. By American standards, basic for these poor victims would be more than luxury, its affluence. I would not forget in a hurry that about eight years ago, while my little four year old niece was visiting Nigeria from the United States with her parents, she, at some point, removed her clothes and went naked because most of the children she saw had no clothes on. However, she did not realize that those children were not naked by choice. Education for these kids is, to say the least, impossible.

I lived in the midst of these needy souls growing up as a young seminarian. However, given my condition as a student, I was incapable of helping. Watching some of them die of hunger and preventable diseases was the most brutal experiences of my life. With my meager resources, immediately after my priestly ordination, I began to offer them some help. I would go back to the village each time I am paid my monthly stipend which, as at then was less than 150USD a month; and would make sure to distribute it among them or purchase food items that would be shared among them. Evidently, what that money could afford was very insignificant but the joy and hope it brought them was huge. I would not forget so easily that, on many occasions, the

distribution of these items, inspired very deep smiles from the hearts, while for others, it brought tears of joy. According to them, the reason for this kind of embarrassing response was a certain consoling feeling that at least someone was thinking about them and that hope, for them once dead, had become once more alive. But all this would be short-lived as I had to leave for Europe to further my studies and since I left they have returned to their sorrowful mysteries and to long nights of misery caused by deprivation and cringing poverty.

As a student in Rome, you can imagine how much help I could give. However, with the help of some high-minded and bounteous friends with whom I shared their ordeals, we decided to initiate a charitable non-profit organization towards their self sustenance. This organization aims to ensure that we give them not only food, but also, if possible, provide them with long term means of sustenance, such as: helping to train them on skills acquisition such as soap making, sowing, weaving, petty-trading, subsistence farming, et cetera, and to equip them after the training with funds so as to benefit from the skills so acquired.

I am writing to invite you to join this noble cause. Besides, I am also writing that you help spread this gospel among your kind hearted friends and parishioners. Join in this project to save lives, and to bring back sunshine into the lives of many abandoned in the cold of hunger, deprivation and misery. Make yourselves available instruments for use in the hands of God. This is a call to rise to the needs of the least of our brethren. (Matt. 25:31-46) It is a request, above all, of your little given in love, for it is not as important how much we give as it is, how much love there is in what we give. Sow a seed that will remain forever in the heart of history and in the hearts of mankind.

To learn more about our plans and projects, please visit us online at DMIWOO.org or contact us at info@dmivoo.org. I pray that the Christmas brings you health and happiness, grace and peace, and in the New Year, Divine bounteousness beyond compare.

Fr Kingsley Phejirika