Dear Friends,

Good evening/Good morning. My name is Alan Carlson and I am from Palatine, Illinois. I am the Mission Appeal Coordinator for the Foundation for Children in Need, serving the poor and aged in the rural villages of Southern India.

I am very happy to be with you today and share with you about our mission work. Each year every Catholic Church in this Diocese invites a missionary to share about the activities in the missions. Today I have the honor and privilege of being with you and sharing that message.

FCN is a Catholic lay organization based in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Dr. Geetha Yeruva and Tom Chitta, lay missionaries from India, established this foundation 17 years ago. I was a founding board member and the first treasurer of FCN. We are a group of lay people who support the work of Tom and Dr. Geetha in the interior villages of Southern India.

FCN sponsors 2500 children and 50 elderly individuals. We have been responsible for building several schools, boarding homes, a community health center and a home for the elderly. We provide free medical check-ups and medicine to thousands of needy people and children. In the past 5r years, with the help of a wonderful medical team, we have helped 800 children born with cleft lip/cleft pallet receive life changing surgeries, all free of charge. It cost FCN 100 dollars to help one child.

The tireless efforts of the foundation flow into many areas of the communities they serve. This past year, over 5,000 students were delighted to receive their own dictionaries and notebooks. An equal number of underserved individuals were recipients of new clothing. Many village schools were gifted with new school supplies and library books.

At the heart of the foundation’s mission is education. Funding an individual’s education through the sponsorship program changes the trajectory of an individual’s life as do the health education classes that Dr. Geetha conducts for teenage girls. Additionally, the Foundation provides training in tailoring and embroidery for 100 young women each year in its tailoring center. Each young woman in this program receives her own sewing machine to practice her trade when she completes her training. It cost FCN 100 dollars to help one young woman.

I have known Tom and Dr. Geetha for many years. I have previously sponsored two girls and I am currently sponsoring two boys, one who is deaf. I have been to India four times and I have seen the mission work and I know firsthand of the beautiful work of FCN.

In October 2015, on my third visit to India, I had the wonderful opportunity to teach English in the FCN school located in the rural village of Porumamilla, AP India, for 3 weeks. It was so rewarding to be able to interact with the students and faculty of this school. They are so happy and grateful for the love and support they receive from the United States.

Your help today will mean a lot in our mission work. Most of the people living in these villages are unskilled agricultural day laborers. For one day of hard work, eight hours, they will make $5.00 or less. Very often they walk three or five miles to the neighboring towns to buy groceries or to see a doctor. The children walk two or three miles to go to school. It is a very dry climate and temperatures can reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.

Dr. Geetha and Tom have been working in these interior villages for more than 35 years. Every year they spend six months in the United States raising funds and then six months in India reaching out to the poor and needy.

The United States has been very kind and generous to the missionaries. It is because of our generosity and prayers that today the missions keep growing and going forward. Even in the small villages where Dr. Geetha and Tom serve, people know that a lot of help comes from the United States. They think of us and pray for us. Today, on behalf of the Foundation for Children in Need and all whom they serve, I would like to thank-you for your prayers and generous support. I would like to thank the Archdiocese of Chicago mission office for giving us this opportunity.

There will be a second collection taken up for support of our missions. Your sacrifice and generous donations will go a long way in helping the needy in the villages of India. Please be kind and generous in this second collection. If you would like to write a check, please make it payable to your parish and write “Indian Missions” on the notes line. If you have forgotten to bring a donation today, please place your donation in an envelope marked for “Indian Missions” and bring it with you next weekend. All of this collection will be put into one check and sent to India so that we can show and share your love in a concrete way to the needy that we serve.

I have with me today a simple brochure about our work. Please take one as you leave the church. I will be in the vestibule and happy to share with you about the foundation.

Our Lord says, “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters that you do unto me”. Saint Mother Theresa said, “The poor give us the opportunity so that we can share our many blessings with those in need”. And today you have a wonderful opportunity of sharing your blessings with the needy in the villages of India.

Today let us ask the Lord to give us mission consciousness so that He also may be generous to each one of us in return.

We are in need your prayers and financial support. Thank-you so much for your kind attention and may God bless you all!