**18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**AUGUST 2, 2020**

**MCP-2020 THE DIOCESE OF KIGOMA IN TANZANIA**

In today’s Responsorial Psalm we responded, “The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.” The First Reading from Isaiah starts, Thus says the Lord, “All you who are thirsty, come to the water, you who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without cost, drink wine and milk.” In the Gospel Reading Jesus feeds challenges his disciples to feed the crowd (more than five thousand people) in a deserted place. Jesus takes five loaves and two fish in his hands and looking up to haven, he said the blessing, brother the loaves and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the crowd. Wow! God’s hand is extremely powerful. The history of salvation is the history of God’s mighty hand in feeding the hungry, protecting the vulnerable, comforting the sorrowful and many others. The Diocese of Kigoma in Tanzania presents its appeal today before you to seek your love to support her missions.

The Diocese of Kigoma is a very rural diocese in Tanzania, which has about 2.2 million under our care of whom 25% are Catholics. We have 27 parishes with 270 outstation churches being ministered by our 66 priests, 620 catechist, 125 nuns, and about 10 religious brothers. The Church in Kigoma is truly in the work of evangelization among people of different backgrounds and religious beliefs, such as Moslems and believers in the African Traditional Religion. Our catechists carry the vital daily pastoral management tasks in our outstation churches where the daily presence of our priests is not feasible. Our parish priests who may have ten or more outstation churches are challenged to travel by jeeps or motorcycles on poor condition of unpaved roads and paths to reach their parishioners. The poverty of our people prevents them to meet transportation as well as other costs to upkeep their churches and support their priests and catechists.

The circle of poverty among our people affects the quality involvement in areas of education, health care and relief services. We as the diocese need to address these issues so that our people may get better education, health care and supplying relief services when needed. Our diocese has another extraordinary pastoral care to the refugees from Congo DRC and Burundi who are in refugee camps in the territory of our diocese.

On top of preaching the Gospel of Christ to all these people, the Catholic Church involves herself fully in the provision of social services to impoverished rural communities, since left to itself, the government in Tanzania can do too little to support them.

The funds we raise from MCP-2020 will support two of our ministries:

**1). Ministry to the Orphan Children:** Lack of funds and high level of poverty of our people challenges our diocese at present to sustain two centers for orphans and street children which are located in the headquarters of the diocesan see. These two centers have the total of 553 children who have been left without parents after one or both of their parents died with HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as many other tropical deceases. Having been left on their own by their impoverished extended families, these children end up looking at the Church as their existing mother and father. At the centers we need to assure these children receive three hot meals in a day and also address their academic and health issues.

**2. Ministry to the Refugees:** Bordering the war countries, our diocese continues to receive influx of refugees from DRC Congo and Burundi. We have three big refugee camps located in our diocese with more than 150,000 refugees. This population arrives in the camps with nothing, wounded physically, psychologically, and spiritually. As the hosting diocese, we need to reach out to them to bring the light of Christ. It saddens to hear traumatic and horrific stories our refugee population have gone through their lives. They need special pastoral care. Generosity of our people to reach out to our refugee sisters and brother in the camps is also challenged because most of our people who would have been prospective donors, have the income of $1.00 a day to fend themselves. It is for this reason that we as the diocese go out to the ends of the earth to request spiritual, financial, and material support to fund these ministries.

We know that you have been hit by the effects of Covid-19 with all shut downs all over. We pray for the end of this pandemic. May God continue to protect and restore you. The Diocese of Kigoma in Tanzania extends its heartfelt gratitude for your generosity for reaching out to the poor of the poor throughout the years. May God reward you for your love. Amen.