Mission Appeal Talk for the Weekend of Aug 2-3

Dear Parishioners:

Greetings to you all. This weekend we celebrate the 18th Sunday in Ordinary time of the Church year. In the Gospel, Jesus is telling His disciples to feed the crowd. It looks like a big joke. How can the disciples afford food to feed such a huge crowd in a desert? However, the disciples were honest and told Jesus what they had. Five loaves and two fishes, that was it! To their amazement, Jesus told them to feed the crowd! And yes, five thousand men, (not counting women and children) were fed. What message does Jesus have for us as we go through this historic pandemic affecting our world today? There are thousands who need to be fed, clothed and sheltered. What difference can we make with our limited resources? Yet we are the disciples of today, and Jesus asks us to bring whatever loaves and fishes we have, and He will multiply and feed the multitude.

Thanks for we are in it all together. Our humanity can doubt what we can do, but our God is bigger than we can ever imagine. This is our call as missionaries. All of us are missionaries. Through going to the missions, through giving to support the missions, and through prayers and sacrifices. As a Community of religious women, Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Nyeri have responded a yes to this call, and we are thankful for the opportunity given to share with you this weekend. Covid 19 Pandemic has made it difficult for us to come in person to make this appeal, but thanks be to God, we have technology. This is our loaf and fish which we believe God is going to make impactful. We thank each one of you for the support that you have always given to all the missionaries who ever visited this parish and appeal for support. Through doing so, you impact Christ’s mission world over. Today, we appeal asking you to support our community and the children we serve in Kenya and East Africa. We particularly appeal for support for our Maria Immaculata Poor Children Center in Nairobi Kenya, an orphanage that supports young boys and girls not only to have food, clothing and a roof over their heads, but also provide needed education that helps shape their future.

15 years ago, as a young professed religious nun, I was shy to make any appeal for help. It sounded like a weakness. However, I met a 12-year-old boy by name Peter, and my perception of asking for help changed. As part of our outreach ministry, we visit families at their homes to share our faith journey. This particular morning, I knocked on the door of Peter's family, and when he came to open the door, his eyes revealed a mixture of tears, and a gaze of great expectation. He asked, "Sister, have you been sent here to help us? And is there anyone who cares about us?' When I went in, I realized that young Peter was the sole breadwinner of his family of 3. He had a 14-year-old mentally challenged sister, and a 2-year-old brother. His mother had died as a result of complication of HIV/AIDs related ailments, and his father was too sick to support them. As a result, Peter had no choice but to step up and provide for this family. My heart went out to Peter. I was just wondering what I would do if faced by such a situation at such a tender age. I went back to my community and shared Peter's plight with the Sisters. The Sisters took this matter to heart and consequently, Peter and his brother and sister were given the help that he had hoped for! They were given the gift of an education in one of the three elementary schools that our community developed for children faced by such a fate. Peter and his brother and sister were all welcomed in our school, where room and board are available, and their father was given the medical help that he needed in one of our hospitals. Little did I know that there were hundreds of children in similar situations like Peter’s family. Through generosity of God’s people whom we encounter, Peter and his brother and sister continued their education. Peter is now 26 years old. He is a wonderful, educated father who continues to care for his siblings and his own family. What is even better, Peter is among those who support needy children in the same school that supported him.

The transformation and impact that this encounter had on Peter and his family gives me confidence to write to you dear Parishioners and appeal for support. In one orphanage in Nairobi Kenya, we have over 500 children who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered and educated. We are committed, by God’s grace to do our best to unlock the beauty and confidence of every child whom God sends to us in need. The support of caring people like yourselves whom we encounter in our missions helps us to make this a reality. Whatever loaves and fishes you have, open your hands and support this mission of Jesus today. He will use it as an answer to the cry of these boys and girls, who could be kneeling at this same hour, asking God to provide for them. God will use you as an answer to their prayer. Dear Parishioners, we are Jesus’ hands and feet. Let us continue do what He commissioned us to do, to make disciples all over the world, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the shelter less. And indeed, whatever we do to the little ones of His, we do to Him. Thanks for your generosity. Be assured of our prayers.

Sr. Helen Murage, Sister of Mary Immaculate of Nyeri from Kenya, working in the Diocese of Camden, NJ.