

### Solace and Comfort To Millions

My dear People:

In appealing to you once again for your generous support of the Laetare Sunday Collection for relief of the needy all over the world, I can think of no more forceful presentation than a quotation from a letter which His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, sent me last week:

"In endeavoring to lead good Christian lives your Catholic people of the United States have been mindful of the admonition of Our Divine Lord's Apostle that faith without good works is dead (St. James 11,20), and so they have devoted themselves with joyful hearts to the exercise of brotherly love.

"By their unflinching generosity, your own charitable organization, the Catholic Relief Services of the National Catholic Welfare Conference has been enabled to bring welcome assistance to vast areas of the world where there were poverty and want to be alleviated; and from their liberality, too, the Common Father has received the means whereby He gave solace and comfort to millions of His children, victims of privations and hardships.

"As you renew your Laetare Sunday appeal to your beloved flock, inform them of the consolation which We derive from the manifold evidence of their lively faith, and of their unflinching devotion to the Holy See; assure them, too, that the invaluable assistance which they have given Us, in Our apostolate of merciful beneficence, has filled Our heart with gratitude and with admiration for the exemplary charity of a people that is willing to make personal sacrifices in order to help others.

"It is not necessary for Us to bring to your attention the need for charity which still exists. When, then, you have recourse once again, in Our Name, to the generosity and understanding of your clergy and faithful, you will tell them of the trust which We place in them, and of Our ardent hope that their response will be magnanimous and liberal as in the past.

"You may assure them that in Our Masses and prayers We will fervently invoke upon them the copious reward they merit for their appreciation of the bounteous resources which Divine Providence has placed at their disposal; and as a pledge of that recompense from on high, We impart from Our heart to you and to the priests, religious and laity under your care Our special Apostolic Benediction."

Your support of this collection in the past has been most generous year after year. Let us not fail the Holy Father in 1961. God bless you all!

Your devoted Shepherd in Christ,

*John Edrington*  
Bishop of Rochester

The Bishops' Relief Collection will be taken up on Laetare Sunday, March 12, 1961.

### SERMONETTE

THE FRUIT OF CHARITY

By Rev. Richard Madden, O.C.D.

The first fruit of the Holy Spirit is this glorious, elusive thing called Charity.

These days we are craning our necks and straining our eyes, seeking some solution to the vastly complicated problems of our time. Do we need a new political system or a new social order? Do we need a wider and deeper grasp of science? Well, frankly, I don't know just what we need. Except, maybe, a little charity.

It seems to me that with a little charity all that surplus food which is costing us hundreds of thousands of dollars a year for storage, could be sent on to those who do not have enough to eat. With a bit of charity greater strides could be taken in slum clearance and juvenile delinquency. A little more charity would create a little less red tape.

But without it, the battle goes on and on. Without charity, a godless Kremlin continues to gobble up nations. Without charity, nation wide strikes paralyze our economy. Without charity, graft and corruption exist among public servants.

If we had a little more charity, we would have a little less bigotry. Then there would be no such thing as the minister from North Carolina, being quoted in Time Magazine as saying, "I fear Catholicism more than I fear Communism." If we had a little more charity, we would have a little less racial hatreds. Then there would be no such thing as those racial wars which have set our country up as a horrible disgrace before the eyes of nations.

As it is, all we can do now is sit back and dream our little dreams of Utopia. But it could be a reality. It is certainly within the power of the Holy Spirit to flood the souls of all men with the fruit of charity and make them see in all suffering men the reflection of the suffering Christ. That is, of course, if men would be willing to dispose themselves for such heroism. Charity could make a man stop thinking always of himself and begin thinking of others. It could make a man love without counting the hardship and the inconvenience that sometimes go along with it. And only when the Holy Spirit is free to work like this among us, only then, are our troubles over.

### Daily Mass Calendar

Sunday, March 12 — Fourth Sunday of Lent (rose), Lenten Preface, 1912—Rev. James Hickey.	Thursday, March 16 — Lenten weekday.
Monday, March 13 — Lenten weekday, Mass as in missal (purple), 1932 — Rev. Arthur Hughes, 1980 — Rev. Bartholomew Quirk.	Friday, March 17 — Lenten weekday, 2nd prayer of St. Patrick, 1929 — Rev. William Cassidy.
Tuesday, March 14 — Lenten weekday.	Saturday, March 18 — Lenten weekday, 2nd prayer of St. Cyril.
Wednesday, March 15 — Lenten weekday, 1946 — Rev. John Ganey.	Priests listed above died on the date indicated. Please pray for them.

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## Dawn of a New Day for Nirmal

By EILEEN EGAN

To Nirmal all the world looked blue. Even the sun, usually so bright and brassy, seemed like an enormous pale blue bubble.

Nirmal could stare straight at the sun as long as he kept the piece of broken blue glass in front of his right eye, and held his hand over his left eye.

He turned his head to watch the vultures wheeling about in the sky. They moved like a squadron of planes over the Calcutta slaughterhouses until the sun began to go down. Then they would settle on the edge of the roof. When the birds became still they would be outlined against the bright sky like a row of paper cutouts.

Nirmal sat in the dust near an old canal that ran right through the bustee where he lived. Bustee is the name for the poor sections of Calcutta.

He was a boy who kept himself busy all the time. That was the best way to forget that his stomach was empty. Nirmal had an empty stomach most of the time.

Nirmal did not run around or jump like eight-year-olds in our country. He played quietly. Though he had no toys, he managed to find things to play with. Then his big dark eyes would glisten with delight. The piece of blue glass was a wonderful find. Once he found an old rubber ball. It did not bounce at all because it had a little hole in it. But he could roll it, and if he squeezed it, it made a funny little sound like a whistle.

His little sister Apurna, who was six, cried for the ball, so he let her keep it as her toy.

Nirmal squinted through the glass at the scene on the other side of the canal. An open-air school had just been started. All the children lined up on the benches were part of the magical blue world. They were reciting the words of the Bengali primer. Their voices sounded high and happy like a hymn in church. "Jal Padey, Pata Nadey," he heard. "Water drips, leaf quivers." Two teachers in white saris led the children every morning and afternoon in the recitation of alphabet and words.

Nirmal thought the greatest fun in the world would be to go to an open air school with other children. He shivered with delight as he said over and over to himself "Jal Padey, Pata Nadey." He could see the thin fingerlike leaves of the neem tree begin to quiver as the monsoon, the rainy season, began. The big drops would fall dancing on the leaves and on the canal. How nice it was at first. Then came the downpour that made a mudhole even of their little house. But it was a change from the furnace heat and thick dust of the summer.

Sometimes the bigger children would read stories from books and the young boys and girls laughed and clapped their hands.

Nirmal put down the piece of blue glass. The world was again a place of bright harsh light and dust. He tried not to feel sad. But he was eight and he was lonely and he could not read like those children on the far side of the canal.

He remembered the night his mother brought back a book from one of the homes where she worked. The pictures were wonderful. "Can you read any of the letters?" his mother asked him. "No mother," he told her, "I can't tell one from another." She looked very unhappy.

"Your father could read and write, Nirmal," she told him. "I thought boys learned to read more easily than girls. You study this book and see if you can tell what the letters are." But it was no use. He could not help himself, and his mother could not help him because she could not read either.

Across the canal the afternoon school was finishing. The boys and girls were helping the two teachers carry the benches and the big pictures to a room near a courtyard where they were locked up for the night.

Nirmal wished that he could see the big pictures right up close. They seemed to be made of shiny material and it was from them that the children read off the letters and words.

Then the boys and girls ran away in all directions, shouting goodbyes to their teachers. He could hear the word "Sisterji," "Sisterji," called lovingly to each of the teachers in the white saris.

Nirmal got up slowly. He remembered how terribly hungry he was and wondered if he would have anything to eat that night.

The sun was going down very fast. It was time to call Apurna and take her home.

"Apurna, Apurna," he called. "Come right away. We must go home. It is getting late."

He did not really know what time it was. He could not even tell time because he had never had a clock in his house. But he knew he had to be home before the sun disappeared behind the other side of the canal.

"Wait a minute, Nirmal," she called in her sweet little voice. "I must tidy my house for tomorrow." The little girl tucked up her cotton sari, and knelt down to smooth the dirt floor of her play house. Then she straightened the mud ridge that served as the wall, and carefully walked out through the little opening that marked the door.

She came toward Nirmal, holding tightly the precious rubber ball with the hole in it. They stood together for a while to gaze at the canal. The reddening sun was reflected in it, and it looked like a long fiery sword. Apurna clutched his hand as though she was a bit afraid.

The boy and girl went home hand in hand. Their home had only one room. Most of the little homes were built around a square courtyard where the noises of crowded families were never ending. But Nirmal's mother had rented a house that stood by itself, quite near the canal.

The floor was of dirt, just like the floor of the tiny play house that Apurna had made for herself. The walls were made of pressed mud, and there was no window. When the door, made of heavy sacking, was pulled down, it was completely dark inside. Most of the people in their bustee lived in houses built like that.

A few of the houses had nice hard floors and even little porches where the people could sit, or even sleep at night in the heat of the summer. These were houses where the fathers were alive. The men would smear the mudfloor and porch many times with cow dung and let it dry. This made the floor hard and smooth. This was the way the thatched



houses in the country were made so pleasant to live in.

But Nirmal's father was dead, and his mother worked so hard that she could never fix up the house. Nirmal could barely remember his father. He had died in the spring when Nirmal was four. Many people die in Bengal as spring turns to summer because a disease known as cholera races through the bustees and the refugee camps.

Boys and girls in our country hardly know the word Bengal—except perhaps from the Bengal tiger at the zoo or the Bengal Lancers on television. But the real Bengal has little to do with tigers or dashing lancers. It is an exciting province to live in, to be sure, but there is a lot of suffering there, too. That is because the province is filled with refugees.

A refugee is a person who has to leave his home place and find refuge with strangers. The Bengal refugees streamed out of their home villages when the province was divided up between India and Pakistan many years ago. More than three million of them came from the eastern part to the western part of Bengal. Nirmal's father and mother had come from their little village near a town called Dacca at that time.

Nirmal and Apurna had been born in a big camp that the Indian government had set up to save the lives of the homeless people. It was there that his father had died. When the camp closed, Nirmal's mother brought him and his little sister to Calcutta, the biggest city in Bengal. Along with a million homeless people, they found a tiny shelter in a crowded bustee.

That is why Nirmal's mother had to go out all day long to her jobs of work. She always said, "Nirmal, be a good boy until I come back to you tonight. Apurna, obey Nirmal as if he were your father."

Nirmal sat down on the dirt floor and carefully lit a small fat candle. The rice that was left over from breakfast, he gave to Apurna. He was so hungry that he would have swallowed it down like a wolf. But no matter how hungry Apurna was, she always ate daintily like a little queen. Then they knelt in front of a beautiful little statue of the Blessed Virgin and said the prayers their mother had taught them.

The statue was made of mud by Mr. Mondal, one of their neighbors. He baked it and painted it and sold it his mother for the leftover sweetmeat rosha gola that she brought back from somebody's banquet. The Blessed Virgin was dressed in a blue sari with a bright red border and she was sitting cross-legged, looking down at the infant Jesus who was sleeping on her lap.

Apurna went over to her corner of the little mud room and curled up on her piece of sacking. Before Nirmal put out the light to save the precious candle, she was asleep.

Nirmal sat in the doorway with his knees drawn under his chin to wait for his mother. Even if he dozed off a bit, he would be ready to jump up and welcome her.

He never knew what she might bring home. She washed the dishes for three large families. In India, a large family means a really enormous one with grandparent, their married sons and daughters, and many grandchildren, all living under one roof. Often they would give her leftover rice and round flat chapattis, or even sweet rusho gola honey balls to bring home. He knew there had been a wedding banquet or a special feast if he found pieces of bright soft silver in the rice dyed golden with saffron powder. He was dreaming of rolling the silver foil and golden rice on his tongue when his mother's hand on his shoulder woke him up.

He was on his feet, ready to help her untie the corner of her sari where she tied the food.

"Nirmal, dear, I have no food at all tonight. Did you give all the rice to Apurna?"

"Yes, there was only a little left from breakfast, Mother."

His mother sat down on the floor and when he put his hand on her face, it was wet with trickles of tears.

"Oh, Amal, Amal, why did you leave us. Why did you leave us?" his mother said suddenly.

Amal was his father's name, and he hardly ever heard his mother say it.

Nirmal wiped his mother's face with his hand. "I am not very hungry, Mother. It was nice today while you were away."

"Apurna made herself a play house, and I found a lovely piece of glass. It is blue and I could see everything blue—even the boys and girls in the open air school."

But instead of being comforted, his mother began to cry even more.

"Nirmal, dear, I want you to read and write like your father, and Oh my dearest one, you can only sit and watch other children learning."

She put her arms around him and sobbed even harder.

"Don't cry mother. I'll be big soon, and I'll work, too. Then I can pay for lessons."

His mother tried to talk, but it was not easy because sometimes a sob would interrupt the words.

"I have only eight rupees and I must give them for the rent tomorrow." In a Calcutta bustee eight rupees pays rent for a whole month. That is less than two dollars in our money.

"We don't have even an anna to buy food. There will be no morning meal tomorrow. But perhaps I will get some food tomorrow night. Try to make Apurna sleep a long time tomorrow afternoon."

Nirmal lay down on his piece of sacking, but he could not go to sleep. How could he help his mother? If he did not have to take care of Apurna, he could help Mr. Mondal hawk his statues and picture frames on the streets. His mother seemed to have fallen asleep, so he crept outside and sat with his knees under his chin. In the dark canal, the round moon was reflected. It was a bit like a fat water pot. He tried to think about his mother, about Apurna—but he could only gaze on the funny brass water pot floating in the canal.

He was awakened by the scrape of a wooden cart. It was the blind leper going by. All the lepers lived in a group further down on their side of the canal. Early every morning, the wife of the blind man pulled the little wooden cart past Nirmal's house into the center of the city. He had only stumps for feet, so he could not walk to his begging place. But how sweetly he could sing the Bengali songs as he was pulled back from a good day's begging.

Nirmal realized that he had been so tired that he had fallen asleep in front of the house, and he tried to creep onto his sacking bed before his mother could find out. But she had awakened and met him at the door.

"My poor Nirmal. What have you been doing? You must sleep or you will be ill."

"This morning, we had only rice water," she said quietly, as she put the rice pot on the tiny mud stove.

As the dry dung patty warmed the mixture, she woke Apurna. The three knelt down to say their prayers before the brightly colored little statue on its wooden stand. In other little houses, Hindu families were performing their morning puja, or worship, in other ways. A few courtyards away, Muslim families were praying to God in their way.

Nirmal's mother was just saying her usual goodbye to the two children when a tall young woman in a white sari came and stood in front of the door. She clasped her hands together to greet them and she smiled.

She was just like the "Sisterji" he had seen teaching the children in the open air on the far side of the canal.

"Good morning," she said to Nirmal's mother. "I am Sister Usha. You may know of our open air schools nearby. Sister Shanti and I have been sent to find out if there is need for a school on this side also. Are there children here who want to go to school?"

His mother looked so surprised that Sisterji went on. "Our schools are free for the needy children of the Bustee."

Nirmal began to smile, and looked up at his mother.

"Thank God, Thank God," said his mother, and then instead of joining him in a pleased smile, her face became tight and tears began to roll down her cheeks.

The Sisterji had a book with her. "We will take down the names of all the children whose parents want to register for the school."

"Next Monday at nine the open air school will begin. There will be benches under the neem tree. All children who register must come every day from nine to twelve."

Nirmal's mother finally spoke. "Will you take both of my children? They are very good. I know they will study with all their hearts." Nirmal is eight. He's a little rascal. And Apurna. She's obedient."

Apurna darted shyly behind her mother's sari as Sister Usha smiled and wrote down their names. They were registered.

And before they knew it, Sisterji had clasped her hands to say goodbye and was approaching almost at a run, the next court.

During the day, the white sari could be seen hurrying from court to court, from door to door. They went to the Hindu homes, to the Muslim homes and to the homes of the Christian families.

In the next few days, there was great excitement in the little mud houses in the crowded courtyards.

One evening, Mrs. Mondal came over to wait for Nirmal's mother. She told Nirmal that her two small sons, who used to go out every morning to sell statues and picture frames on the streets would go to school instead.

When his mother returned, carrying a few tough chapattis, Mrs. Mondal gave her the good news.

"All the children will get a big meal

after school everyday. That is why I can let the two small boys go to school instead of working for a few annas."

"How can this wonderful thing be done?" asked Nirmal's mother.

"Who are these young Sisters? Where can they get so much food?"

"My Muslim neighbor knows them from another bustee. She calls them Prem Acharya, the Preachers of Love. But they don't preach, the Muslim woman told me. They do good for those who need them. They even pick up the sick and the dying from the streets and care for them. The Mother who started all the work opened the first school in Motijhil bustee. Mother Teresa is her name. It was under a plum tree next to a pond. Now the first school has four big rooms for classes. Maybe that will happen here, too."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if the school could have a roof by monsoon time?" said Nirmal's mother. Her eyes were shining happily.

"But," she asked suddenly, "how can the Sisters give the children a big meal if they have to teach them all morning?"

"That's our work," said Mrs. Mondal with a hint of pride in her voice. The mothers will cook the rice and beans and mix powdered milk in the courtyard next to the neem tree. The food is free because it is given free, by the people in America. The Sisters said the mothers serve meals in about a dozen other free schools."

Monday morning at eight, Nirmal and Apurna were standing in front of their little house. Their mother had scrubbed them with canal water and their clothes were carefully washed.

They were impatient for the smiling Sisterji to appear. Other children were moving towards the neem tree. There were nearly a hundred of them.

The squeaking cart went by. The leper in the cart was humming a song. His wife stopped for a moment.

"Are you going to have a school here, too? The school for our children begins today. Thirty of them are all ready for the Sisters. Just think, the first school for our children." Nirmal's mother clasped her hands in greeting and then waved at the woman as she pulled the cart away.

Nirmal suddenly thought of something and he laughed to himself.

He turned to the other children. "Sisterji is already late. Her name is Usha and she should have been here with the dawn."

Everybody laughed because Usha means dawn in Bengali.

"I know you are going to be a bright wonderful student—just like your father, Nirmal," his mother told him.

Nirmal stood up tall and proud. He would soon tell those letters apart. He would soon read what it said under the pictures.

His mother said goodbye to him as he stood confidently holding Apurna by the hand.

Sister Usha and Sister Shanti came in an old car. A man put eight benches under a neem tree, and the Sisters hung up large pictures with letters, pictures and words on them. Nirmal could hardly wait for the lesson to begin.

One of the boys told on him. "Nirmal said you were late, Sisterji," he said.

"Did you, Nirmal?" asked Sister Usha. "We came at nine, as we said."

"Go ahead, tell Sisterji," said the boy.

Nirmal hesitated, then he thought he had better explain it all.

"Sisterji," he explained, "your name is Usha and I said you shouldn't come at nine o'clock, you should come with the dawn."

Everybody laughed again and Sister Usha laughed as loudly as anyone.

Then her face became quite stern and she said, "You also know that Sister Shanti's name means Peace, so from now on that is what we will have, Peace and Quiet."

The children divided up into two classes and the morning went by in a dream. The sharp pointed leaves of the neem tree cut some of the bright sunlight so that they could see the charts. "Jal Padey, Pata Nadey," murmured Nirmal happily. Sister Usha heard him. "You'll be reciting that soon enough," she told him. Nirmal tingled all over. He could hardly wait.

Then came the meal, two bowls of rice and beans for each child, and a big bowl of milk. They sat on the floor inside the square of the courtyard and smiled happily at one another.

"This food," said Sister Shanti, "comes from far away. It comes from America where people grow a lot of food. They send it to India and other countries to share it with people who can't grow enough food. Ships come every day with wheat and corn and rice and milk powder. Say the world America."

"America" said the children wondering-ly. She told them much more.

home, he was bursting to tell her the news. Over the cold chapattis, he pointed out two letters in his book that he could read already.

He told her how Sister Usha had laughed at the joke about her name. Then he told her about the big meal for all the children. "We had two bowls, mother. We could have even had more if we wanted. Sisterji said the food came from the people in America. They send their food out in ships for people who are hungry. Even the children in America give money to help feed hungry children far away. I wasn't hungry a bit. And Apurna—she ate so nicely. But she ate two bowls full."

"And you know what Mother. I looked at the afternoon school through the blue glass again—and it wasn't magic anymore. Now I like to look at our bustee the way it is. The neem tree is so lovely, Mother."

"This is the best day I have had since your father and I left our home on the Dacca side," said his mother. "I was beginning to lose hope. Now I can have hope for my two darlings—even though we are poor."

She put her arms around Nirmal's shoulders. He felt cozy and ready for sleep. "Sisterji," he murmured lovingly, "America."

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