

# Donors See Impact Of Giving Homes To Families In Need

Like most people, John Wilding wanted his charity to the poor to be meaningful. He was thrilled by the fact that his contribution to *Food For The Poor* could provide a home to a family in need.

"My whole family was elated. The money I gave served a permanent purpose. People are going to have a roof over their head — a place to call home — and that's important," he said. "The value is great. It's amazing how little it takes to build a house and give a family a roof over their head."

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John Wilding,  
Program Benefactor

Since it was launched in 1992, thousands of American Christians have participated in *Food For The Poor's* homebuilding program, giving new hope to Jamaican and Haitian families in desperate need. Under the current program, gifts of \$2,000 sponsor a home fully; however, contributions of lesser amounts can also be combined to produce a "team-built" home. This allows virtually anyone to participate in the outreach and enjoy the satisfaction of giving such a significant gift.

Many contributors to the program say their gifts are a response to the blessings God has bestowed on them.

"A home has been our top priority in the 50 years we've been married, and we thought someone else should have the same advantage," said Patricia Perkins.

Edward Larragee had a similar viewpoint. "Haiti and Jamaica are

destitute. Ask yourself if you would want to live like that. If you wouldn't, then what are you going to do about it?" he said. "The Lord has provided so much to me. I thought, 'Hey, I should give some of these gifts to someone else who needs them.' I felt it was time to do something worthwhile."

There should be no doubt

about the importance of such a gift, according to *Food For The Poor* founder, Ferdinand Mahfood.

"The priests and nuns working among the poor of Jamaica and Haiti will tell you that a house is the most valuable gift we can give — a priceless blessing to those who receive it. The poor can find scraps of clothing or a bit of food for the day, but they can never afford even a simple home," he said. "Instead, they live in crude shelters made from rusty tin sheets, plastic and old lumber. Most sleep on a dirt floor. It's tragic."

And when these poor families receive a home, thanks to an American donor, there are tears of joy and thanksgiving.

"It's like you've given them the world, and it's a blessing they know comes from God. They respond as



*"Before and After" — For families who had been living in severe poverty, receiving one of Food For The Poor's homes is an answer to prayer.*



if they were feeling the mercy of Christ directly," Mahfood said.

The greatest value of the home may actually be more subtle, according to priests who work among the poor. Once poor families have stable, safe places to live, they often begin a process of recovery. They break the cycle of poverty by securing employment and by sending children to school for an education.

"Yes, the value of a home goes far beyond the obvious benefits of providing shelter from the sun, wind and

rain. For many families, this is a starting point to a new, more hopeful beginning," Mahfood said. "What an amazing gift to give someone in need — a gift that represents love, hope, dignity and a brighter future."

*To contribute to Food For The Poor's housing program, send their tax-deductible contribution to: Food For The Poor, Build A Miracle — Dept. 25585, 550 SW 12th Avenue, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442.*

## Food For The Poor's Founder Shares Pope's Concern for Poor Families in Caribbean

The writings of Pope John Paul II for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 encourage Roman Catholics to visit "brothers and sisters in need...as if making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them."



His call to action, which highlights the powerful impact of Matthew 25:34-36, has been welcomed by the *Food For The Poor* relief organization.

"I was thrilled to see Pope John Paul II draw attention to that passage in Matthew," said Ferdinand Mahfood, founder of *Food For The Poor*. "In it, Jesus describes the final judgement of humanity and says, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' In a powerful way, Jesus is telling us that God wants us to put our love into action."

Mahfood encourages American Christians to take the Pope's words to heart by either taking a pilgrimage to an area of need or by inviting a

priest into their church to hear firsthand about the plight of the poor. The *Food For The Poor* ministry can provide opportunities in either case. It hosts monthly trips to Haiti, Jamaica or Central America, and its "speakers bureau" serves churches nationwide.

"The year 2000 represents a wonderful time to focus on international poverty and to make a difference in these areas of need," Mahfood added. "It's a new millennium — a time of new beginnings — an opportunity to celebrate the renewing power of Christ."

Ultimately, Mahfood hopes the Pope's words will inspire American Catholics to help fight the war on poverty in the Caribbean and Latin America.

"Jubilee 2000 presents us with a meaningful challenge to look beyond ourselves," Mahfood said. "I fervently believe that if we accept that challenge and work together, we tap the power of combined Christian charity to make a difference in the world."

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