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Food For The Poor's Outreach Creates Hope Among Riverton's "Dump Dwellers"

In underdeveloped countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean region, the poor are forced to use any and every resource possible to survive — even city dumps.

I was shocked the first time I saw a man eating food out of the dump in Riverton, Jamaica, related Jim Cavnar, executive director of Food For The Poor. He found a box of spoiled and broken eggs and he was carefully

collecting the least damaged ones, carefully putting them in a basket. When I asked if he came to the dump often, he said 'every day.' No one should have to live that way."

In the years that followed the incident, Cavnar has been committed to helping the poor of Riverton and similar sites in other countries. Working with the priests and nuns who serve in these areas, Food For The Poor supplies food,

clothing, basic housing, medical supplies and educational opportunities to the poorest of the poor.

"Food and housing are the most urgent needs," Cavnar explained. "And of those two, a house has the greatest impact. Many of these families live in the dump in junk cars or patchwork shacks fashioned from cardboard, bits of rusty sheet metal and scraps of lumber. By giving them a simple one room house costing \$2,000, we provide them with a start at a new life. We give them the foundation to improve their lives."

During the past several years, Food For The Poor's assistance programs in the Riverton dump have sparked a new sense of hope among the poor. Hundreds of lives have been changed in meaningful ways.

"With a home and other help from Food For The Poor, one woman's family was able to pursue great things. Her daughter was able to go to school and did so well that she is now pursuing higher education. She says she wants to become a doctor — with the ultimate goal of serving other poor families in Riverton," Cavnar explained.

To extend this important outreach and help more people in need, Food For The Poor is seeking support from churches and interested laypeople in the United States. The ministry's goal is to double



its work in Riverton and other dump "communities" in the year ahead.

"There are more than 7,000 families living in the Riverton dump alone. This year, we would like to build at least 300 homes and supply the poor there with at least \$50,000 worth of food, clothing and medical supplies," Cavnar said. "The job may seem daunting, but I know we can do it with support from American Catholics. By combining their gifts, large and small, we can accomplish significant things for the poor."

Readers interested in contributing to Food For The Poor's outreach can use the black and white brochure inserted in this issue or send their tax-deductible gifts to: Food For The Poor, Dept. 25583, 550 SW 12th Avenue, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442.

Food For The Poor Welcomes Pope's Focus on Needy Families During 2000

The Most Reverend Paul M. Boyle, Bishop of Mandeville (Jamaica), has become a fervent champion of the poor. Heart-wrenching poverty is something he sees every day in the streets and neighborhoods of his Diocese.



"Hunger and homelessness are serious problems here. So many families are struggling. Unemployment levels are very high, and the value of the Jamaican dollar has been shrinking. It's very hard for families to survive day to day," Bishop Boyle said. "I do everything I can to be a help to them."

In addition to working personally and directly on behalf of the poor in Mandeville, Bishop Boyle has also tried to raise public attention to the needs of the poor throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. He serves on the board of directors of Food For The Poor and has met with Pope John Paul II as a representative for that relief ministry.

"I'm proud to say that Food For The Poor has become an important force for good in this region, and Pope John Paul II thanked us for dedication to the poor," Bishop Boyle said. "Ultimately, though, we can do these things because Food For The Poor's work is supported by so many American Catholics and their churches. The benefactors of Food For The Poor are the real heroes of our cause. It is their commitment and contributions that allow us to provide the poorest of the poor with food, housing, medical care and other critically needed aid. Because of them, poor children can go to school. Because of them, families are able to lift themselves out of poverty. Because of them, there is a new sense of hope."

Since it was founded in 1982, Food For The Poor has developed a significant relationship between the Church of the "First World" and its counterpart in the developing countries of the Caribbean and Latin America. More than 20,000 churches, and millions of people are represented on both sides of this awesome relationship.

"The linking of cultures, churches and people has been a tremendous blessing, and I believe it is a sign of Christ's mercy in our world today," Bishop Boyle said.



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