

Compassionate Catholic Families Help African Orphans Overcome Plight

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The story of Rute Salomao is one that every American Catholic should hear. It is proof that God is working in our world, and that He has an amazing role for us – not only as a Church but also as faithful individuals. It is also proof that our Lord can turn disaster into hope and despair into joy...and that we can participate as instruments of that remarkable change.

Rute's story began with a cry of desperation and a prayer for help.

Her story ends with God's miraculous answer to prayer...and with a new beginning.

"In less than a year's time, Rute's childhood collapsed around her. The sudden deaths of her mother, father and older sister ripped away everything that gave her comfort, support and stability. Suddenly, she was no longer the 'daughter' or 'sister' in a poor but intact family. She had become an orphan – and the caretaker of her younger brothers and sisters," explained Jim Cavnar, the president of Cross International Catholic Outreach, a mercy ministry serving the poorest of the poor overseas. While visiting Africa with the goal of assisting Christian outreaches, Cavnar met a group of Catholic laywomen who were serving the poor in Mozambique. These women explained Rute's plight, and asked Cross International Catholic Outreach to help her.

"The death of Rute's parents put unbelievable pressures on her, and you could see the pain in her face. She was struggling to feed herself and her family because as young as she was, she was the only one her younger siblings could turn to. On top of that, the house they were living in was on the verge of collapsing. It was little more than a shack, and one wall was

beginning to buckle in," Cavnar related. "The Catholic ministry I was working with in Africa wanted to help Rute and the other children, but they didn't have the financial resources to provide the food or to build a new home. That support would need to come from some outside source."

And thankfully, it did. A Catholic family

than that – a young woman had her tearful prayers for help answered through the power of Christ and His Church.

"We all felt the hand of God at work in how Rute and her family were helped, and no one knows a greater sense of satisfaction than the donors who provided the gifts for her food and house. They were

little it can take to provide such a significant impact in the lives of the poor. The cement block home constructed for Rute was \$3,500, and the food and other necessities her family is receiving only cost a few dollars a week.

"Our other efforts to help orphans in Africa are equally cost effective. For just \$61.92, we can supply food to a child for a full year," he explained. "It doesn't take a lot to make an impact, but it does take a willingness to become involved – to step forward and say, 'I will take part. I will make a difference.' With that commitment, God can answer prayer and work miracles. He can work through us to bless the poor."

Now that Rute is safe and her family has been helped, Cross International Catholic Outreach is working with its African ministry partners on other needs, just as real and urgent as Rute's.

"As we resolve one need, we try to reach out to another orphan – another family struggling to survive," Cavnar said. "If Catholics in America continue to support our work, we will be able to respond – building more homes, feeding more children, supplying medical care and meeting other urgent needs. In that way, God will work in us and through us, and what a blessing that will be!"

Readers interested in supporting this ministry and the others partnering with Cross International Catholic Outreach to help the poor can use the Cross brochure enclosed in this issue of the newspaper. Contributions can also be mailed to: Cross International Catholic Outreach, Dept. AD00203, 490 White Pond Drive, PO Box 63, Akron, OH 44309-0063.



The death of both parents made sixteen-year-old Rute the head of her family. Cross International Catholic Outreach and its ministry partners in the U.S. are helping her by providing a safe home, food and other necessities. This is just one example of the many ways American Catholics are having a tangible and meaningful impact on the lives of poor through the ministry of Cross International Catholic Outreach.

in the United States learned about Rute Salomao's need and they responded by providing the funds needed to construct a simple but sturdy home. Other American Catholics also stepped forward to supply her family with food and other necessities.

In little more than a week's time, a specific and urgent need had been discovered, and a solution had been found. But, more

able to play a major role in God's plan of mercy, and they know that their contributions have had a tangible and meaningful impact. Rute and her family live in a safe house today, and her once dashed dreams have been renewed. The donors' willingness to act for God's glory has made all of that possible."

Cavnar also pointed out how relatively

A Special Outreach During Lent Will Bless All Who Accept the Challenge

"As God does all in and through love, so we are called to imitate His example."

With those words, Most Rev. Sam Jacobs highlights both an incredible truth and an important challenge for faithful Catholics during this season of Lent. At a time when we marvel at Christ's incredible love and sacrifice for us, we also seek ways to honor and glorify Him by imitating His example.

One powerful passage of Scripture that can guide us is 1 John 3:16-18, which reads: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth."*

Bishop Jacobs, who serves on the board of Cross International Catholic Outreach, finds great inspiration and blessings in that passage – especially during Lent. The

ministry's president, Jim Cavnar, agrees.

"We both see our ministry to the poor as a response to Christ's sacrifice, and many of those who contribute to our outreach share that view," Cavnar said. "By meeting the needs of the poor during Lent, the power of Christ's own sacrificial love is living on and on. It is continuing to have an impact in our modern world, and we see it in the smiling faces of hungry children eating a meal...in the tearful thanksgiving of a family provided with shelter...in those and so many other ways."

Cavnar shared a concrete example of how a donor's gift during Lent can have this long-lasting and profound benefit to the poor.

"A contribution can be used to dig a fresh water well in a poor village that can serve hundreds of poor families for generations to come," he said. Imagine knowing that your sacrifice during Lent is having that kind of tangible impact for a village. They will see your gift as an answer to prayer and a blessing from God."



"Cross" Strengthens Its International Outreach

Cross International Catholic Outreach continues to develop its relationship with the Vatican and the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Holy Father's outreach ministry to the poor. In a recent meeting with Pope John Paul II, Joseph and Ann Brennan also shared their excitement about the outpouring of support Cross International Catholic Outreach has received from American Catholics. Earlier this year, Cross and Cor Unum collaborated on a special mercy outreach to earthquake victims in Iran.