

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."

It's one of my favorite Canadian Food For Children photographs. It has a permanent place in my memory and heart. At first glance, it appears to be a photo of a young boy looking defiant, arms crossed, standing barefoot, on what appears to be his school books. It seems like a rather funny photograph. When Dr. Simone explains the photo, a deeper reality emerges. He told me that "what the picture doesn't show is how cold it was when it was taken." The young boy lives in the mountains of Peru. There is no snow in the picture but Dr Simone said it was freezing outside. Look at the long shadows in the photograph. It is late fall, early winter. The boy's arms are crossed, not in defiance, but because he is cold. He is standing on books because his barefeet are numb from the cold. As the young boy walks to school, he stops periodically and stands on the



books. This gives his feet a chance to thaw and warm up. He is standing on English school books. Peru, as you know, is a Spanish speaking country. While they won't help him to study, the books will help him to keep his feet warm. This is an example of the creativity and the resilience of the poor. Dr. Simone insists that we can learn a lot from the poor. Things, that we throw away here in Canada, have a value and usefulness that we cannot see because we are blinded by our affluence and wastefulness. Sometimes, we are afraid to think outside the box.

Visiting students at the CFFC warehouse always enjoy watching and helping Dr. Simone load one of our containers. Dr. Simone insists that we have zero waste. Packaging cardboard, broken boxes and plastic shrink wrap are never thrown out. These items are carefully included inside the containers we are loading. We stuff these items around the nutritious food, clothing and medicines that we send in every cargo container. We fill every "nook and cranny." Dr. Simone has seen people live in homes made of cardboard boxes. He has seen plastic shrink wrap used to repair holes in the walls and roofs of the houses of the poor. We have hundreds of pictures at the CFFC warehouse taken over the years that document this. When students see these photographs, they are amazed.

You may remember, several years ago, that fruit juice and ice tea were sold in small glass, drinking bottles. When you would open these drinks the metal cap would slightly pop. Generous beverage companies would donate these drinks to CFFC and we would distribute them to the poor. Dr. Simone would tell us how much the children would love these drinks. They enjoyed the fruit beverage but they really loved the empty bottle. Poor children would cherish the fact that they had their own glass bottle that they could use and reuse for drinking water.

It's hard to believe all of the good that comes from every donation and gift that we share with the poor. The Holy Spirit is full of surprises. The poor have taught me not to be wasteful and to be grateful for all of the good things that I have. I will continue to learn from the poor. They have a wisdom and resourcefulness that should never be overlooked.

During this Christmas season let us ask God to guide us in our shopping and gift giving decision making. This Covid19 time has been hard for many of us. Please try to remember the poor. Jesus is the reason for the season. The great humility of the Incarnation of God is something to always remember.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich." (2Cor8:9)

Dr Simone and Joan continue to operate his walk-in Dermatology Clinic. It is open 6 days a week. They see about 300 patients a week. His earnings as a doctor support this charity. He would want me to wish you all a happy, peaceful, and joyful Christmas. We pray for your good health. May God continue to bless us all in 2021.

CFFC Volunteer from Home Program:

Marcela Hontoria Arroyo, a grade 11 student from Loyola Catholic School in Burlington, Ontario, hosted a Covid19 Personal Protective Equipment Drive for the poor last month. She collected soap, hand sanitizers, gloves, and masks. She made posters and fliers advertising her event. She set up a safe drop off spot to collect the donations. Thank you Marcela for remembering the poor and for being so creative. If you know someone that might be interested in this program please see our website. Covid19 won't stop us from loving and helping the poor. Covid19 will never stop Marcela. Young people are our future.

