

## May The Angels Lead You Into Paradise

**On October 14, 2021, William "Captain Kirk" Shatner, blasted off into outer space.** He became a real astronaut courtesy of Jeff Bezo's space tourism company, Blue Origin. Jeff Bezos is the founder of Amazon. His estimated net worth is \$201 billion USD. He gifted Shatner with a 10-minute rocket ride to the edge of the earth's atmosphere. Cost of the trip, \$28million per passenger.

**On September 25, 2021, Father Flavian Mucci, OFM, went to Heaven.** Fr. Flavian was born Dominic John Mucci on March 1, 1935, in Boston, Massachusetts. He was one of Joan and Andrew Simone's closest and dearest friends. They communicated via email or telephone every week. They collaborated on many projects. I could write a book about their friendship.

Fr. Flavian grew up in a poor Italian family. His father, a stone mason, died when he was a young boy. The Knights of Columbus and Catholic nuns in his Boston, "Eastie", neighborhood, stepped in to help his mother and younger siblings survive. It was this experience of love that shaped his view of the world and led to a lifelong passion to serve the poor. He wanted to share the unconditional love his family was shown by the Catholic Church when he was a young boy. During his priestly formation when the seminarians were told to go home and give away all of their earthly possessions, he had nothing to give away "not even 5 cents." He said in an interview: "I was born in poverty, and I know how it feels to be poor. I know how these people feel when they have nothing." Fr. Flavian loved the poor and he saw Jesus in the poor. It gave him the strength to never give up. "Love keeps us going and we never stop, we are always looking for ways to help them."

Fr. Flavian was ordained to the priesthood in 1963 after completing his studies at the Franciscan Seminary in Lowell, Massachusetts. He took the name Flavian after St. Flavian the Confessor, the Patron Saint of Constantinople.

He arrived in El Salvador in 1967 with one piece of luggage. He lived and worked among the poor for over 50 years including the violent civil war in that country. While directing a Catholic religious retreat he was once asked "Father Flavian, when is a good time to pray?" He replied, "when there is an AK-47 machine gun pointed at your head." This was something he experienced more than once during the war in his adoptive country. He was a contemporary of Bishop St. Oscar Romero. He once told me that when he would visit Bishop Romero in San Salvador (capital city) his heart would break. "There were always poor mothers crying outside the bishop's office waiting and looking for help to find their missing sons." (They had almost certainly been kidnapped and killed by the extremists.)

Dr. Simone mentioned that Fr. Flavian required armed bodyguards 24 hours a day. Fr. Flavian was not afraid to be killed or to die. Far from it. He was always ready to go wherever Jesus led him. His fear was that he might get kidnapped, and the poor would pay his ransom using money they did not have. The poor loved Fr. Flavian and he loved them. "My whole life is in El Salvador. Everything I have is here." He wrote to the Superior General of his Franciscan Community to get permission **not** to go on his annual clerical holiday. He said, "the poor never get a holiday from their poverty, why should I?"

It was a Christmas dinner in El Salvador, for the homeless, in 1977, that changed his life forever. During this meal, Fr. Flavian experienced a peace and joy that he could not describe nor forget. He first set up a small "soup kitchen." This led him to start the Agape Association of El Salvador. Today, Agape runs homes for the elderly, schools for low-income students, a university, a farm, health clinics, mobile medical services, restaurants, a hotel, training centers, a TV station, and a radio station. Agape is the largest partner of Canadian Food For Children. We send at least one 40ft cargo container to Agape in El Salvador every week. The food and aid they receive from CFFC is shared throughout Central America. The Simone family just recently set up a hemodialysis clinic at one of the Agape hospitals.

Fr. Flavian understood the deep spiritual value of work and the crisis of unemployment, especially for men. He tried to create work for the poor. He wanted everyone to have a job. Agape is currently one of the largest employers in El Salvador with almost 1000 paid employees. The TV and Radio stations he established help to evangelize and teach the Catholic faith to the poor. He could see value in everything. He was resourceful and creative. He was like Dr. Simone in this regard.

Fr. Flavian visited Toronto and stayed with Joan and Andrew at their home. He wanted to see the Canadian Food for Children warehouse in Mississauga. The volunteers who load the containers appreciate that Fr. Flavian and Agape are one of the easiest agencies to support. They make very few special requests. John Antonacci, one of the regular volunteers, thought he might test the limits of what Fr. Flavian could use in El Salvador. He brought dozens of items to Fr. Flavian and asked him if these things could be used by his community? There was not one thing that he brought to Fr. Flavian that he could not use. He shouted **"We want and need everything!"**

On May 28, 1992, he was declared a **Meritorious Son of El Salvador** by the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador. On the Monday after his death, the Government of El Salvador voted and declared **3 Days of National Mourning** for Fr. Flavian in appreciation for his work among the poor. The entire country stood still in remembrance. Due to Covid19, Andrew and Joan felt it unwise to travel to El Salvador for the funeral. They watched some of the funeral on the internet. A few years ago, they drove 10 hours overnight to attend Fr. Flavian's mother's funeral in Boston. Fr. Flavian cried when he saw them at the funeral. Tears of Joy to be sure.

Although he seldom returned to his hometown, he always maintained his love for the Boston Red Sox baseball team. He would proudly wear his Red Sox cap along with his Franciscan habit everywhere he went. As a young boy he wanted to be a professional baseball player. His family was too poor to make this dream even remotely possible. Jesus had other plans for him. I have a great memory of watching a Red Sox vs NY Yankee baseball game with Fr. Flavian and Dr. Simone on TV. Since they are both deaf and were not wearing hearing aids at the time, the volume of the TV was turned to the max level. It was so loud that I thought I was going deaf. They were both exhausted from a long day of work, but they watched the game together like brothers. In his later days, Fr. Flavian would drive his motorized scooter, that CFFC obtained for him, giving out granola bars to the children after Mass each day. He was like a proud grandfather. Although he needed assistance to celebrate Mass towards the end of his life, people, young and old, would form a long line after Mass to receive a special blessing from him.

Prior to his death Father Flavian was asked by a reporter what he thought his legacy should be?

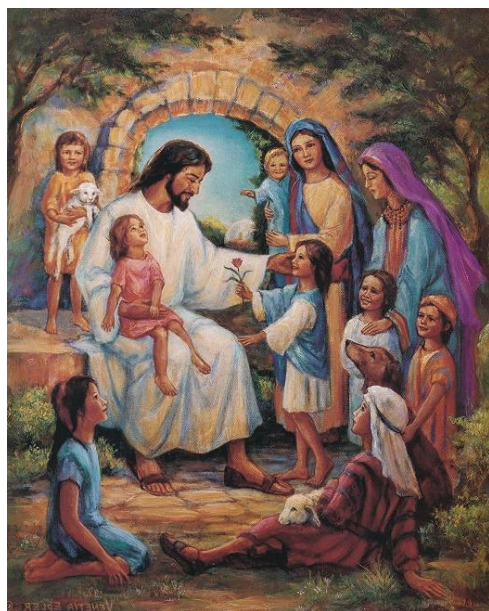
“I always tell the people after sermons, after telephone calls or after conversations with them.... I love you,” he answered. “They are three simple words that express what I think of them no matter who they are. I try to love everyone as best as I can, and I would love to be remembered as the priest who loved me.”

We celebrated Holy Mass at the CFFC Warehouse on Friday, October 8, 2021, in thanksgiving to God, for the life, work, and friendship of Fr. Flavian Mucci. Be assured that the Agape Organization of El Salvador is in very good hands. Fr. Jack Hoak, OFM, is the new director. He is a very hard-working priest. He is also a very good friend of Dr. Simone and his family. Fr. Jack and the Agape team will continue to do good work for the poor with Jesus as their guide. Rest in Peace Fr. Flavian. “We Love You.”

-- Brian Finamore

### **In the Gospels, we see God's tender heart for children.**

Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Luke 18:16).



*God has blessed us with these beautiful great grandchildren.*



*Chance, Axel Andrew and Dillan Moffat – Dr. Andrew and Joan Simone’s great grandsons.*



*Reggie, Hank and Kobe – Dr. Simone’s sister Maggie’s great grandsons.*

All too often there are news headlines about billions of dollars moving through investments to take advantage of market conditions to make even more money. Let us pray that the scales of justice become more balanced by serving and sharing with those who are in need. In this we are welcoming and serving God.

On behalf of my parents, Dr. Simone and Joan Simone, and all our CFFC volunteers, we wish you a very Blessed celebration of Christmas. In this Advent season, may we serve those in need to bring the love of Christ into this world.  
God Bless,

-- Eva-Marie Moffat (nee Simone)