

## **“Dr. Simone, Don’t Be So Cheap”**

When Dr. Simone travels he always flies economy. He never uses donated funds to CFFC to pay for his airfare. He will do cosmetic surgery, outside the normal hours of his clinic, to make some extra money to pay for his flight ticket. He already donates most of the money from his full time medical practice to Canadian Food For Children. CFFC counts on this money every month. When he travels, he always puts some US money in his pocket for emergencies. Not for himself, but emergency money for mothers and grandmothers that he encounters on his visits who are caring for their children. These women live in poor, remote, desolate places. Dr. Simone will give them, when he can, \$25-\$50 as emergency money that they will need in case one of their children gets sick or to pay off the violent gangs that demand and extort money from them. Sick children may need medicine and transportation to and from the medical clinics that are available to them. These few dollars come in very handy as every mother knows well. These women will cry when Dr. Simone hands them a small envelope with money inside. People will work for a month, full time, to earn \$50. Before his trips, he packs the maximum luggage that he can, suitcases filled with food, medicine and small toys for the children. His suitcases are carefully and strategically packed by his wife Joan or by one of his grandchildren. Every square inch of his suitcase is precious.

At the end of his trips, Dr. Simone leaves everything behind. He will have left not only the contents but even his actual suitcases behind. He will empty his pockets. On his trip home all he will have is his Rosary, camera, and some reading material. He won't have money to even buy himself a coffee at the airport. He will have given everything to the poor he has encountered. One time he had to wait at an airport in the US for six hours for a connecting flight back to Toronto. He prayed the Rosary and was trying to occupy his time but he was really hungry. He decided to go for a walk around the airport to try to take his mind off his hunger. As he was walking around he noticed in the distance a husband and wife eating some Chinese food. (Dr. Simone loves Chinese food) He noticed that as the couple started to eat the food they weren't enjoying their meal. In fact, they pushed the food away and were shaking their heads. The husband picked up the food, almost two completely untouched Chinese meals, carried them and left them on the garbage stand and walked away. The husband and wife appeared to be headed back to the food court to buy something else. Dr. Simone saw the plates of food sitting on the garbage stand. He examined the food, which looked quite good and edible. He was so hungry that he brought the food to a nearby table, sat down, said Grace, and began to eat. He told me that the food was quite tasty, in his opinion. What he didn't notice was that the husband and wife looked back as they walked away and they had noticed what

Andrew had done. The wife angrily took out her wallet, approached Dr. Simone and threw \$5 at him and indignantly shouted: "Don't be so cheap, go and buy yourself some good food."

For Dr. Simone eating the Chinese food was not a question of being cheap. He was very hungry and the discarded food was available. The food that we waste and throw away are resources that are taken from the poor. Food should never be wasted. Food is a precious gift from God. Every year, in Canada, good food finds its way into land fill sites. While this is happening people are starving in places that are only a few hours away by airplane. We even have hungry people right in our community that depend on food banks. Jesus wants us to share and to love our neighbor. We know from the Gospel, the story of the Good Samaritan, that our neighbor is anyone who is in need. This is one of the beautiful things of our charity, we can share food with our neighbors around the world. Large Canadian companies are able to donate food to CFFC that they might otherwise have to throw away.

Dr. Simone also wanted me to pick up another important detail when he shared the above airport story. He wanted me to be aware of the humiliation that the poor often feel because of their poverty. The poor are often made to feel cheap, lazy, and like animals. The woman at the airport is like many people in our world who think that throwing a few dollars at a problem will make it go away. The poor have their dignity. We know that Jesus loves the poor. We know that when we help the poor it is Jesus that we serve.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink...Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?" (Matthew 25:35-40)

I asked Dr. Simone what he said to the woman when she threw the \$5 at him. He said that I smiled at her and said "thank you very much." I'm sure the \$5 was donated to CFFC when Dr. Simone returned home to Canada. For Dr. Simone and Joan, their poverty and way of living brings them joy. They would never be ashamed or embarrassed of this gift from God.

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