



AMAZON RELIEF

1456 Blythe Drive NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504-2531

*Caring for the Poorest of the Poor
Assisting Victims of Leprosy
Helping Families Break Out of Poverty
Educating "At-Risk" Children
Donations are Tax-Deductible
No Administrative Costs*
December 2021

Dear Parishioners:

There is a *Prayer for Children* which contains a powerful reflection on the plight of many children:

"We pray for children...who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead...who watch their parents watch them die...who don't have any rooms to clean up...whose pictures aren't on anyone's dresser...whose nightmares come in the daytime...who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep...who live and move, but have no being...who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it." (Written by Ina Hughs)

I have seen it all in the Amazon. I have held those children dying of malnutrition. I have been in their shacks where there are no rooms to clean up...where the floorboards sag over a rat-infested cesspool, reeking with the smell of raw sewage.

Sometimes all this poverty seems overwhelming. One can wonder "What can one person do about all this?" The answer is "A lot!" While none of us can solve all the problems, each of us can, with minimal cost and virtually no disruption to our lives, change the life of at least one child living in these conditions.



I want to thank St. Thomas the Apostle Parish and its parishioners who have for years been lifting many of these children out of poverty. Over the past 26 years thousands of "at risk" children have been helped with daily meals and an education. These children have progressed through grade school, high school, trade schools, seminary, and college. Many are now employed in every conceivable job and profession — even priests, lawyers, dentists, accountants, and schoolteachers. Their lives are forever changed, as are the lives of their future parishioners or spouses and children. And these same children (now young adults) are giving back, helping other "at risk" children advance in their education.

What is also happening with your donations goes beyond the school children. With your help we are funding soup kitchens, providing food to families during the covid pandemic, and caring for victims of leprosy. Over and above all this, one of our main goals is to bring the people we serve closer to Christ. To do this we provide religious education in all of our schools and other programs, fund missionary travel, and build needed churches (54 so far). We also fund educational costs for seminarians, candidates to the permanent diaconate, and lay leaders; fund diocesan evangelization programs, Bible studies, and youth retreats; and promote and deepen the faith lives of people living in remote jungle areas through digital and other media.

At the top of this letter we prayed for those children "*who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.*" We thank you for being that hand, and we ask that you continue to help. You are truly changing lives — for today, tomorrow, and with God's graces, eternally!

Jim Flickinger, OFS

P.S. **Not a penny of your donation goes for administrative expenses.** Everything goes to those in need. Every donation is important, for each donation allows us to help one or more additional person(s). And when we serve them, we serve Him.

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