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Deus Meus et Omnia
(My Lord and My All)

Christmas 2014



My Dear Co-Missionaries,

What can I say to you that will express my extreme appreciation for your continued support, love and prayers? It is at times like this that I want to hug each of you for caring and sharing with my now grown children who continue to suffer so much. There are times like now that I want to be back in Liberia helping the kids as they fight to maintain their own health while at the same time reaching out to

help their neighbors because of your generosity.

I am deeply thankful to God and the JCADF team for working so hard to keep them away from Ebola and for expanding my vision to help so many in need. After the war when we had repatriated to Monrovia I would allow our little white truck to carry many of my children out to the refugee camps where no one had food. We would all work and package up small bags of food and when the truck would arrive at the camps people would come streaming out of tents singing. We had so little to offer yet my kids in wheelchairs and on crutches would pass out the precious parcels to as many as we could while everyone would sing songs of Praise to God. The children would then stop and pray with the people and the crowds would be so appreciative. There were over 10,000 people in that camp and we probably had 50 packs of food yet it did not seem to matter. The people were so deeply appreciative that someone even cared to come and visit. As today, so many were dying of starvation.

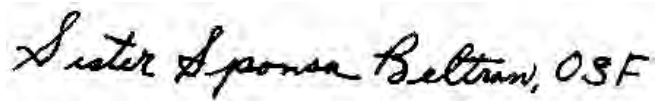


I often sit in the chapel and I wonder if they even remember what I ever taught them. Today, I know that they do and as the program continues to grow, my heart overflows with thanks for your unending generosity. You are all so special. Once again you have reached out to my abandoned children and helped them follow God's wishes to love your neighbor as you love yourself. As sick as many are they are happy and they have a smile upon their faces because they know they are helping to serve God's poor and hungry and all because of you.

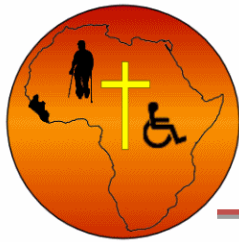
May each of you have the most Blessed Christmas ever with your loved ones and may you be at peace in a world full of turmoil because you know that God knows your sacrifice. Thank you, thank you, thank you for helping us once again when we were in dire need. You are so loved!

You are in my constant prayers today and tomorrow and always. Abundant blessings like that first Christmas night when a little king was born in Bethlehem to bring Peace and Joy to all the Earth. You have brought this same kind of Peace to me this year and I am deeply grateful.

Love and Prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister M. Sponsa Beltran, OSF". The script is cursive and elegant.

Sister M. Sponsa



Jerry Cebulski
African Disability Foundation Inc.
"Disability does not mean inability"



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JMJ

Christmas 2014



Beloved Co-Missionaries,

Another year is coming to a close and words can never begin to express our gratitude and that of Sister Sponsa's young people for your ongoing generosity. We knew way back on March 31, when Kevin returned from Liberia, that there was an Ebola outbreak and the country was going to be in for a

long, hard struggle. A struggle between good and evil. This was a virus that was discovered in 1976 with an outbreak along the Ebola River in Zaire. Few in Liberia had ever heard of the disease and we did much research to uncover what we were about to face.

Since March, there have been thousands of deaths from this hemorrhagic disease. Early on, borders were not closed, schools continued to remain open and hospitals turned patients away due to overcrowding and lack of knowledge. The disease is spread through bodily fluids, and as Sister Sponsa's children describe it, "It is a silent war." We immediately set precautionary rules that our staff conveyed to the rehab residents and families throughout the local communities. This was a big teaching moment. In essence, if one follows the rules and has no bodily contact with others, they will be safe and will live. Even shaking hands with or kissing another person had the potential to end life. One of Sister's young adults emailed me saying, "Things are so bad we are beginning to be afraid of each other. You never know if the person standing next to you, sweating in the heat of the African sun, will be the one who will infect you."



We speak around the clock with staff and Sister's young adults through text message, email, phone, Facebook chat and Skype. They have been terribly frightened. But we have never been more proud of these young people and we hope you as supporters are proud of them too. As each day passes, we are engaging with stronger, more courageous and resilient human beings who have developed more self-confidence in the last few months than they have since they first arrived at Sister's doorstep. They have become leaders, taking the initiative to educate their people on the facts of how Ebola is spread and are trying to give back to their community. They are watching out for each other and for their neighbors as well.



To prevent contamination, many communities are utilizing buckets with spigots to thoroughly disinfect. These buckets cost \$10 USD each or \$18 for the giant "economy" size. Enough were bought for the Rehab and all the handicapped village children along with chlorine and soap and everyone washes before entering or exiting all buildings. Displaying the bucket at left is Elijah, who is twelve years old and is completely blind. He has a sister Agatha, age ten, who is also blind.

Armed guards patrol the villages with rifles night and day. The Liberian government did not want their citizens to know how many were truly dying of Ebola. Bodies were removed at night and buried in shallow graves where packs of dogs would sniff them out and feed on them, potentially contaminating humans who came in contact with the dogs. In most cases, entire families were wiped out after going to the hospital and being rejected. They would collapse in the streets or go home and contaminate other family members. Reluctantly, we sent you that emergency letter because we could see from a medical standpoint that this was going to continue for a long while. Although we knew what was happening, it was difficult to imagine the terror these people must feel. Curfews and armed guards reminded all of war experiences and that was only ten years ago.

Then came the big challenge. Sister's kids told us horrific stories how people around them were dying, not only of Ebola, but also starvation. I asked these young people what they would like to do. Their response really did not surprise me. They wanted to sacrifice and save some of their own food and reach out and feed their neighbors. It was at this time we started receiving your generous responses to our emergency appeal. We are happy to tell you at this time (November 2014), that as far as all of the people in our care in the JCADF program, we have not had one case

of Ebola. The young adults in the JCADF program have distributed to date almost 2,000 family food bags which are packed with an abundance of food staples, plus chlorine, buckets, and washing soap. Next week, the staff will be distributing food bags to the families of our village handicapped and some of Sister's children will be distributing about 750 additional bags in the slum community of Sinkor. So many in need have been fed with more to come.



Anyone who has computer access can go to www.facebook.com/groups/JCADF and look at daily comments and photos that our staff and Sister's children have posted. They will continue to feed and educate their community as long as this health crisis continues. It never ceases to amaze me that these people who are considered cursed or "witched" because of their own disabilities learned so much from Sister Sponsa's example. These are bright, caring adults of integrity and they are true leaders. They appreciate everything you have given and they just want to keep their people alive.

Although we have kept Ebola-free, we have had many other health crises. Malaria and typhoid are rampant and it is only recently that we have been able to get people to clinics to be tested for the most common diseases. Since March, our staff has made over 400 trips to local clinics, transporting the handicapped for malaria and typhoid treatments. Because of the fragile nature of those we are dealing with, we cannot possibly ignore any symptoms as they are very similar to Ebola. There are very few qualified doctors left in Liberia at present so it is a challenge, as always, to find appropriate medical care. Many physicians have died from Ebola or have fled to the US with their families to seek safety. Visiting volunteer doctors from other countries are the only ones treating Ebola patients. We still have a number of cases of cancer, people who need amputations, hysterectomies, D&C's and others who could never be operated on in a facility caring for Ebola patients. The entire health structure has collapsed even further which is hard to imagine.



During the food giveaways, our young adults have discovered many illnesses among those seeking sustenance. One woman arrived with a piece of fabric lightly draped over one arm. She was in excruciating pain and Roosevelt Prowd, one of Sister's now grown children who was leading that distribution in Sinkor, asked her what was wrong with her arm. She said she felt she had malaria and typhoid, but was afraid to seek help at the hospital as there were so many there being treated for Ebola. Instead she heard of a nurse living nearby who offered to treat her in her home. An IV was started and this poor woman was left unattended. When she finally yelled out in agony, the nurse came back only to find that the needle had come out of the vein and the medication had caused the flesh on her arm to slough off. By the time she got to the food giveaway, a terrible

infection had set in on her arm. Roosevelt found out where she lived and the next day he scoured the area seeking a doctor. Roosevelt arranged for this doctor and his assistant to treat the woman at her home. Today, because of one of Sister's children, this woman still has her arm and she has a new "son." Others have found families with tuberculosis and diseases related to severe malnutrition. In the last week alone, we have lost three able-bodied community children due to severe malnutrition.

Two more of Sister's wheelchair bound children, Lawrence and Konah, found a woman named Mamie, who was in desperate need of assistance. She was very weak, emaciated, had a severe cough and was spitting up blood. When they spoke to her at a distance, they found that her malnourished two-year old, Prince, was also coughing severely and that the family had no food left in the house. JCADF was notified, and because of your generosity, a large amount of nutritious food was delivered. Mamie and the child were taken to a nearby TB hospital, where they were both diagnosed with tuberculosis. However, they were sent home after receiving treatment, due to the Ebola crisis. Lawrence and Konah volunteered to be Mamie's "alarm clock", calling her each morning to remind her to take her meds and to give Prince his. Sadly, Prince's illness was too severe and he passed away a short time later.





We received a phone call and Daniel Thompson, also known as Koko, passed away on November 27th. Daniel and his brother Alexander have been with Sister Sponsa for at least 15 years. Alexander passed away two years ago from the same disorder as Daniel. They both had a disease that would not allow their bodies to utilize the vitamins and nutrients that we all get from food. Essentially, they die of starvation and dehydration since their bodies cannot absorb these nutrients. Through the years they have seen many doctors visiting Liberia and no one was able to diagnose their problem. In 2007, when Sister Sponsa returned to the States, the boys' mother moved into the Rehab to care for her two sons. Daniel was a cheerful 24 year old who was helpful in gathering the younger residents for dinner and evening prayers or wherever he was needed. Most of the time he was confined to bed and his wheelchair. Many of the residents have posted on our Facebook page how much he will be deeply missed but they know that God called him home because he was needed.

This holiday season, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for helping us to save so many lives and to educate thousands about Ebola and its repercussions. Because of you another of our village young adults, Augustine, a hunchback and epileptic, received surgery for a strangulated hernia and an early Christmas present: his first bed. He is no longer sleeping on an old mat in the dirt. We believe this was one of the first surgeries performed since the Ebola outbreak began.



Early in this battle, we knew we were no longer going to be working only with the handicapped. There was no way that we could avoid helping the able-bodied when the whole country is hungry and struggling. We have been able to make connections to purchase food at this time. The ports to the country have been closed so we are still unable to send out our sea container but we continue to collect items so when it is ready to send, it will be packed full. Everything that we have collected has been packed for shipping and is waiting in multiple storage units. If you are able to help in this capacity, we especially would like to find more school desks, chairs and wheelchairs.

Below is a letter of gratitude from Sister's children:

Dear Friends and Donors of JCADF,



We want to say a big thank you to you for your tremendous help and support throughout this Ebola epidemic. When there was no hope of surviving from this disease that had no cure, you provided us with that hope; when markets began to close and we worried about food, you provided for us; when we were frightened and afraid you

were there to comfort and pray for us. When we were sick you sent us to clinics and hospitals for treatments. We are so grateful to each of you for all the help. Now through your help we are able to share with the starving community members who are dying every day.

The Ebola epidemic has brought so much pain to our people. Hospitals and clinics were all closed and everyone was focused on Ebola. No treatment centers were available for other ordinary sicknesses like malaria, typhoid, cough and other ailments. We remember one of our close neighbors who lost her one year old baby who got burned from hot water. They took him all over for treatment and the baby was rejected and died a short while later in his mother arms. It was frustrating and painful for all, you know. We thank God through it all Sister Sponsa's children were not hit by this deadly virus and we are still praying that this virus will go away. It has killed thousands and it is still infecting so many.

Once again we say thank you and God bless for the great help you are continuing to give us. May you all have a Blessed Christmas. We will pray for each of you.

*God Bless,
The Rehab Family*

We wish each of you and your family a glorious and Blessed Christmas and we are humbled by your continuous support, both financially and emotionally. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are still available to make arrangements for presentations to groups on our project. Most important of all, please keep Liberia, our staff and especially Sister's

children in your prayers. You are all in ours. May God bless you all abundantly for sharing and loving and never forgetting His Least.

God Bless You All,



Angie Cebulski



Eileen Rockensies



Kevin J. Rockensies

All contributions should be made out to:

JCADF

and sent to:

*Jerry Cebulski African Disability
Foundation*

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Donations are tax deductible

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