



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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Happy Thanksgiving?



Dear Mission Friends:

In this month of giving thanks (33 years after our Office sent the message at the right), when our world is being hurled upside-down, leaving it hardly recognizable in spots—by the hundreds of thousands abandoning their homelands and entering the U.S. without due process, either due to abject poverty and fear or opportunism and greed; by the devastation and helplessness brought about by hurricanes and wildfires ripping through communities and destroying everything in their paths; by the horrors of ever-enlarging war zones and ever-effective and sophisticated weapons... [how can we possibly have a happy Thanksgiving?](#)

Even for those of us who won't have been directly affected by any of the above crises, how can we be grateful when others' lives will never be the same? Should we be thankful for what we haven't been burdened with, for not living in Haiti or Honduras or El Paso or

“A Thanksgiving Message of Joyful Gratitude” (from Missionaries in Action, Nov. 1991)

“Our missionaries in Mexico and our staff in the Mission Office extend their gratitude to you for your continued generous support. We pray that Thanksgiving Day, November 28, will unite our American people in heart and in mind, gratefully acknowledging the bounty, the benefits, and the blessings we have all received. Have a magnificent Thanksgiving Day!”

Florida or North Carolina or Ukraine or Russia or Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip or Lebanon or...or...? Wouldn't that be feeling thankful at the expense of those who *have* been affected? Or worse, we could be falling down that slippery slope of feeling *happy* that we are not one of them. It is such a common sentiment to feel joy upon learning of the pain of others that there is a word for it—*schadenfreude*—which has been adopted from the German by English and other modern languages. But even if we don't go as far as feeling joy at the misfortune of others, we probably at least feel guilty that we have been spared.

These feelings are common to all of us as human beings. In fact they can often be brought on by grief. If we didn't feel sorrow for those actually enduring such hardships and loss, it would be business as usual, no problem.

As mature adults, however, we carry communal grief with us always—besides those losses to the world we love, whether caused by nature, such as hurricanes, or by human nature, such as war, we also carry grief over losses to our community—people, businesses, open land, traditions, or long-time values that have died or been destroyed. Additionally, while we are carrying, in varying degrees, the grief of these current crises, we have our own personal sorrows to deal with. (There's always something!) And certainly we have all felt guilty by grieving over them because the sorrows of others always seem so much more severe. We ask ourselves how we can possibly compare our sorrows to those who are truly suffering. Indeed there are always circumstances much worse than our own and so we often deny our grief, holding it in, crying in private, and not allowing it to be witnessed or shared with others.

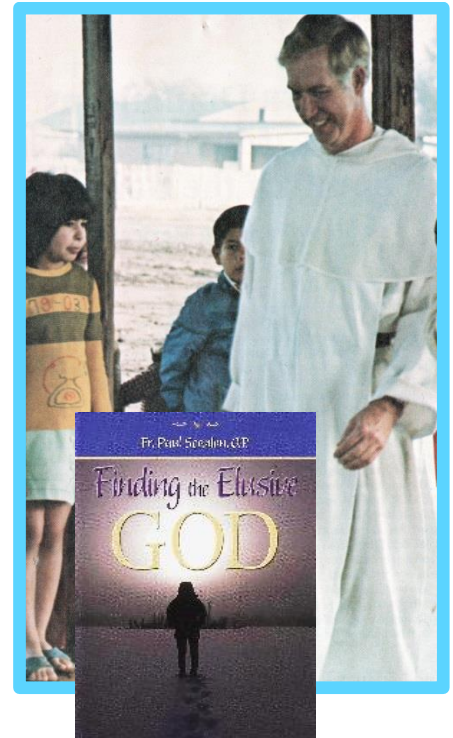
But our grief is ours and it is real, and it is essential for us to acknowledge it and share it. Another reason for holding it in is that we don't want to be a burden to others. But wouldn't we be honored to have others share their grief with us, to be asked to sit with them and offer support? It goes both ways. "There is no gesture of kindness that is wasted, no offering of compassion that is useless. It is sacred work"* to be compassionate in the face of every degree of sorrow we see.

Sorrow is our common bond and it connects us with everyone everywhere. When we take in the sorrows of the world, we can be overwhelmed by the grief, but also united with the world, and that entanglement aids in our own healing. Oscar Wilde wrote, "Where there is sorrow, there is holy ground." It strips us to our authentic selves and allows us to be fully alive, to experience "the heartening quality of compassion,...the full breadth of love, the surprise of joy,...the sheer beauty of the world."* It trains our hearts to be flexible, to be ready for the unpredictable, to discover our capacity to respond and restore. It adds depth and contrast to the canvas, without which our lives would be shallow and uninteresting.

But what do grief and loss have to do with Thanksgiving? Grief and gratitude go hand in hand. "Life is hard, filled with loss and suffering; life is glorious,"* filled with joy and beauty.

An acceptance of and familiarity with both truths are required to be fully human. **The most essential teaching that sorrow imparts is that nothing lasts. Everything therefore becomes a cherished gift, which means that there are always, always things to be thankful for.** In this particular moment, regardless of the "bounty, the benefits, and the blessings" being a bit reduced due to expanding grocery bills, it's OK and actually **crucial to be thankful and even openly happy for all the gifts we do have.** Like everyone in this complicated and chaotic and lopsided world, we will eventually lose what we love, but our sorrow will ensure that the love remains ever in our hearts. "We must couple grief and gratitude in a way that encourages us to stay open to life."* In fact, as William Blake wrote, "The deeper the sorrow, the greater the joy" that will eventually overshadow the sorrow.

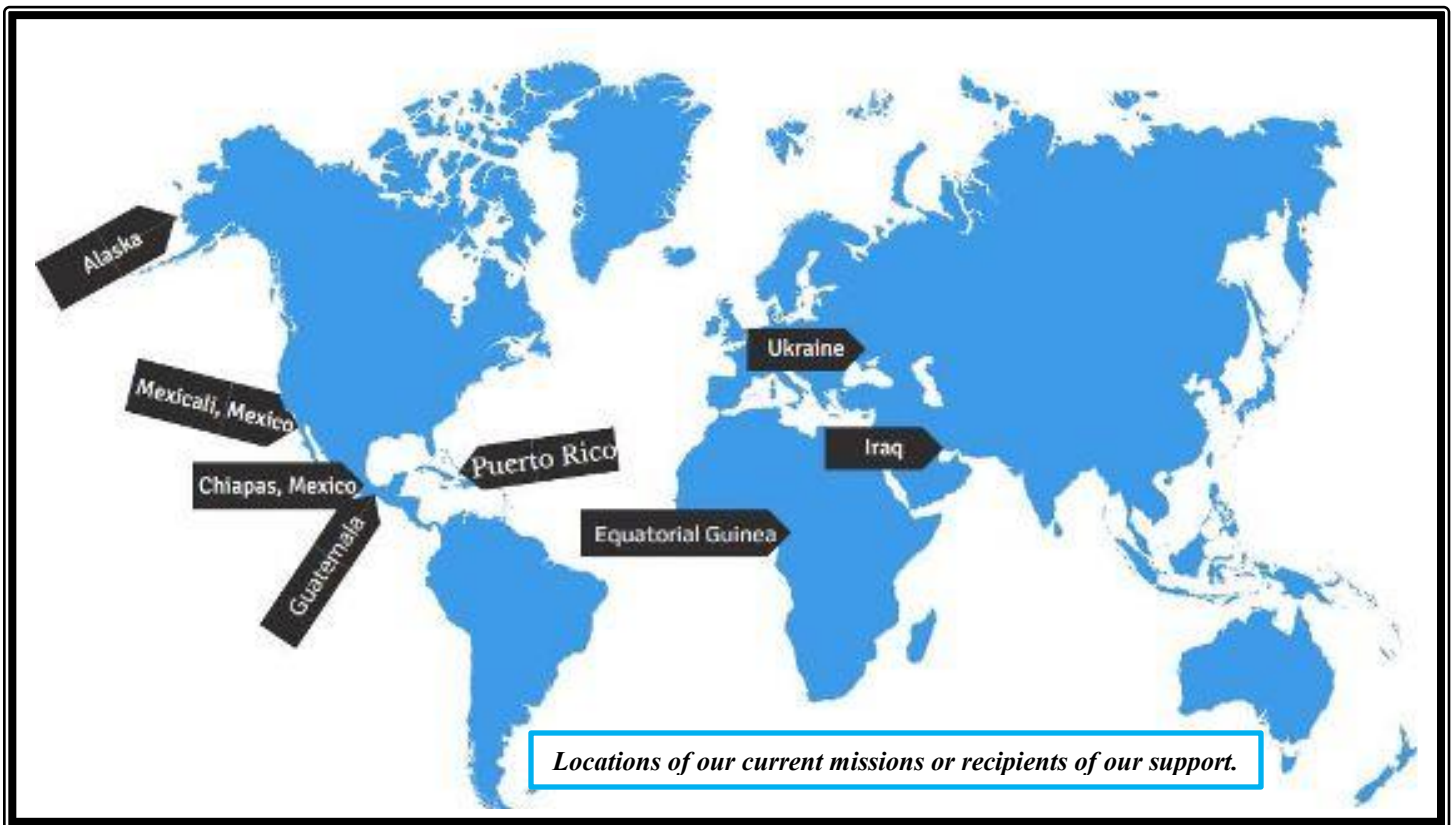
As Martin Luther King, Jr. said so well, we are all connected in "an inescapable web of mutuality." And awareness of the mutuality of suffering impels us to search for ways to heal the whole and to find gratitude in the process. **That connection is what has always driven our friars to choose the unfamiliar, unpredictable, humble path of a missionary.** One of our most traveled friars, Fr. Paul Scanlon, O.P. (above right) once said, "I am blessed and humbled that the Lord Jesus has let me serve Him in so many ways and in so many places."



Besides ministering in several parishes and colleges throughout California and Arizona, he studied Tagalog in Manila, served in Anchorage and the Aleutian Islands, visited Chiapas every year for eight years while provincial, and served at our mission in Mexicali for "the most important nine years" of his life. He loved the missionary life and was especially beloved by those he served. Father documented what he learned from the wonderful disparity of his ministries in an inspiring book, *Finding the Elusive God*, and I'm going to let him speak for all our missionaries because he did it so well.

Fr. Scanlon describes his journey of faith as one in which he "experienced exquisite moments of joy as well as times of hard sledding,..." during which he acquired a "heightened interest in social justice issues and a deeper knowledge of God through living among the poor," whom he found to be truly rich in goodness and faith.

* Quotes with asterisks are from Francis Weller's *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*.



“This crisscrossing of continents allowed me to discover a commonality in the outlook of those who live close to the land ... I discovered a beautiful simplicity of faith that could enrich those of us who have materially so much more than they. Yet I never once heard them complain and if asked, they readily shared what little food or clothing they had with a neighbor who needed it more.” He writes that it was “the poor and humble class of Mexicali that gifted [him] with their wisdom that one need not be a bishop or governor to be beloved by God, for these men who sold tacos on the street and the women who worked picking lettuce under a broiling sun were as Christ-like as anyone I ever met in the sacred halls of the Vatican. I am greatly indebted to these humble people so rich in faith and generously accepting in their love.”

Father continues, “These meditations are meant, in an odd sense of irony, to be an offering to each of us from the treasures of the poor.”

All our missionaries over the decades have repeatedly talked about receiving the same treasures, the same gifts. All their paths, while many and varied, have led them to learning the same lesson, that **“Persons ... who have suffered greatly somehow develop a more penetrating awareness of God’s presence in ... the human person [and the world he created.] They actually teach us about prayer and contemplation, life and death, suffering and joy...”**

Yes, “we carry a sorrow deep inside our bodies for the suffering earth,”* **but we cannot possibly face the horrors of the world with any sense of balance without also remembering its beauty.** “We were meant to dance and sing, play and laugh unselfconsciously,” to “notice the mustard in bloom,” to enjoy the “birdsong, the scent of sweetgrass, the taste of wild huckleberries...”*

We could not fully exist without the delight of the world surrounding our senses and sharing it with others.

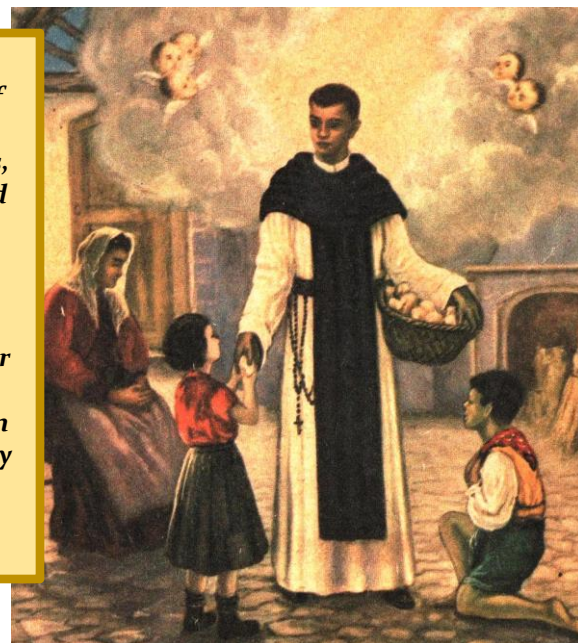
Due to the selflessness of all our friars and to the generosity of you, our Mission Friends, over the past 60+ years, we have been able to improve the quality of life and bring the love of Jesus to those in our mission areas all over the world, and to receive, in turn, such irreplaceable gifts for which our missionaries will be forever grateful. We feel sure that Fr. Scanlon and all our missionaries in heaven will intercede in asking God’s blessings and grace for all of you who have allowed their work to continue, keeping their legacy alive.

How thankful we are for them and for you! And so, as we greeted our readers 33 years ago, **“Have a magnificent Thanksgiving Day!”** And say ‘yes’ to that extra piece of pie!

In gratitude,
Lesley Warnshuis



In honor of the Nov. 3rd feast day of our patron, St. Martin de Porres, Mass will be offered at St. Dominic's in San Francisco on Nov. 1, 2, and 3, invoking his intercession for your intentions. We invite you to join us in prayer each day by reciting the Triduum below.



I didn't mention a further uncommon crisis which will cause much grief—the U.S election—because, as I write this, it hasn't happened yet. But it's an odd one. Very soon after you receive this, the country will have elected a new President, and while the winner may not be certified for awhile, it's probable that not only will half of our population be sorely disappointed, many will be so outraged and bitter as to bring about the severing of old friendships, familial bonds, and even marriages. If your candidate loses, try to remember what's important and that nothing lasts forever! And try not to talk politics at the Thanksgiving table...

Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.

JFK

YEAR-END GIVING AND TAX BENEFITS

As you do your tax planning, we hope you will consider making good use of the income tax charitable deduction.

Your year-end gift can reduce your income taxes while providing meaningful support to the Dominican Mission Foundation.

Upcoming Mission Appeal Weekend

If you are in the area, come and hear our preacher and director, Fr. Jordan Bradshaw, O.P.

St. Sebastian, Sebastopol Nov.16-17

St. Martin de Porres Triduum

Nov. 1: *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Nov. 2: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Your petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Nov. 3: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Your petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)