

Kumbo, Cameroon,  
Nov. 1, 2009.

Staff and Students of Notre  
Dame High School,  
Toronto, Canada.

Dear Friends,

You cannot imagine how happy I was when I heard from Ms. Lorraine Treacy that you had once again been very generous toward our people here in the North West Region of Cameroon. The news came at a very good time because this year people are suffering more than ever. Because of global warming, we have had poor harvests for several years and thus the price of food has increased dramatically. Many parents used to sell some of their crops to pay the school fees for their children but now that is no longer possible. They are very grateful if they produce just enough for their families to survive. To make matters worse, school fees have increased, books have become more expensive and some schools are charging a "building fee" so that many, many parents are no longer able to educate their children. It is a tragedy. If the cycle of poverty and oppression is ever to be broken it will only be through the education of our young people, especially the girls because they are the main victims.

Let me tell you a little about some of the people you have helped. Veronica is a very bright young woman who wrote and passed her GCE (General Certificate of Education) Advanced level a couple of years ago but because her family is extremely poor she could not follow her dream of becoming a teacher. Thanks to you she is now a student in the Teachers' Training College in Kiyam, not too far from here. She is very grateful and will no doubt be a very good teacher.

You have also helped several families to buy food and other basic necessities, a couple of times paying the rent as well. It may help you to understand how much some of our people need the support of people like you if I tell you about Vanessa. This beautiful girl is the oldest of 7 children. Last year, when she was 13, she was raped and became pregnant. By a miracle she gave birth naturally although the doctors thought that she would need a Caesarian because she is so small --this is a VERY expensive operation here. Her parents are young (Delphine became a grandmother at 31 years of age) and very poor. Two of the children have problems with their legs and may need surgery but we are hoping that better nutrition and more vitamins may be enough to straighten them. You have helped this family by buying food and by paying the school fees of Vanessa and some of the others.

You have paid the hospital bills for several people; Malaria is a big problem here and so is meningitis, at times. Unfortunately, many children become deaf as the result of meningitis or mumps. There is a school for these children but it is very far from here and so their parents can rarely visit them. Many are poor and can never visit. We desperately need a school for the deaf in this area but funding is the problem. There are very few facilities for handicapped people in this country and those that exist are almost all related to a church and are funded from abroad. There is much yet to be done.

Some of you may remember that a few years ago I wrote to you about Flodia Mboosing, a sickle cell patient who also suffers from osteomyelitis. Both conditions cause excruciating pain during "crisis" times. I cannot count the number of times that it seemed that she would die but God had other plans and Flodia is still with us. Both her legs were amputated above the knees and for a few years she was always in a wheel chair. Now she has artificial legs which allow her to stand up in her class rooms and at home. The legs are heavy and so she does not walk much but is very happy to get out of her chair when she can. Her influence in her school is amazing because, when she is not in crisis, she sparkles. It is as if she has already peeked into heaven. The teachers and students love her and are inspired by her courage.

Another special girl that I want you to know is Eunice Dzelambong. When she was in form one of secondary school she was stricken with gangrene. Her mother is very poor and not educated so she took her to a native doctor instead of to the hospital. When the principal of her school went to the house to find out why she was absent from class he was horrified to see her condition and took her to the Bansa Baptist Hospital where both her legs were amputated below the knees, her right arm below the elbow and the fingers of her left hand. She was left with only her left thumb. Eunice, like Flodia, has great courage. After a year in hospital, and using artificial legs, she managed to go back to school. She is very intelligent and, despite her handicap, wrote and passed the GCE (General Certificate of Education) Ordinary

level and also Advanced level. She wanted to study physics, chemistry, biology, math and further math for the A level but, despite my efforts, she was not permitted to have a lab assistant. Because it is impossible to work in a lab with only one thumb, she had to change her courses. She is now in her second year in the Teachers' Training College--she expects to teach economics and math in a secondary school when she graduates. She is a beautiful young woman who never complains and who has managed to be very independent. She will certainly be an inspiration to her students. A dentist from Germany came to our area last year and I asked if there could be a way that Eunice could go to Germany to be fitted for an arm--I explained that we have no money. This good man solicited funds and now

she has an arm which makes some things possible that she could not do before. They also gave her new legs which are lighter and more flexible and so walking is easier. You cannot imagine how grateful she is. Her three weeks in Germany were a wonderful experience for her and for her sponsors. Dr. Helmut sent me an email in which he wrote, "We are all better people because we have known Eunice". Please keep both these special young women in your prayers.

This letter is already long and so I will end by thanking you again for the effort that went into collecting the funds and for your generous response to your sisters and brothers here who have less than you have. Please thank your parents who encouraged you to be generous. I am deeply grateful to the members of the chaplaincy team and to all the teachers and administrators who approved and supported the fund-raising program. You can be assured of the prayers of the people you helped. I expect to go to Canada in 2010 and hope that it will be possible to thank you in person. Blessings on each of you.

Gratefully yours,

Marilyn von Zuben CND