

Extending God's Love to the Underprivileged. Centenary Bank, Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy, Mapeera - Kampala, Christmas Outreach Donation to St. Vincent Pallotti's Initiative for PWDs, Kitovu, Masaka.

Christmas is about giving and sharing. "Advent is a period which reminds us of God's unending Love to mankind. For He so Loved the World that He sent His only begotten Son to Save Us. Jesus also emphasized one rule, that is; Love for God and neighbor. On this special day, we are privileged to witness the love of Christ being extended to Children with Disabilities and their parents. We give thanks and praise to the Almighty God." These were some of the words of the Bishop Emeritus, Moroto Diocese, Rt. Rev. Henry Sentongo, during the celebration of Mass with Children with Disabilities, their caretakers, Kitovu Community and a team from Centenary Bank Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy, Mapeera, on the Christmas Outreach held at St. Vincent Pallotti's Initiative for PWDs Kitovu, on Saturday 15th December 2018.

The day that began with the celebration of Mass at 10:00am was graced by dignitaries among which included the Bishop Emeritus, Moroti Diocese, Rt. Rev, Henry Sentongo, Rev. Fr. Rapheal Ssemmanda(DAC Representative), Rev. Fr. Eugene Kalyango (Director St. Vincent Pallotti's Initiative for PWDs), Mr. Yiga Deo and other members of the Board of Directors of the center, Representatives of the Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy, Centenary Bank, Mapeera led by Mr. Kimbowa Francis and Mr. Kaliisa Edward, (Manager Centenary Bank, Masaka). The Guest of Honour was the Masaka District Probation Officer Ms. Nagawa Maria.

This Christmas Outreach was organized to share the joy of Christmas and deliver a package of donated items from the Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy at Centenary Bank Mapeera, Kampala to children with disabilities and their caretakers at the center. The items which left over 210 beneficiaries and their caretakers in oceanic joy, amidst giving glory to God, included, physiotherapy equipment, beds, mattresses, blankets, clothes, Sugar, Soap, Rice, among others.

Mr. Kimbowa Francis, the chairperson, Uganda Martyrs chaplaincy Mapeera who represented a team of Centenary Bank from Kampala head office, thanked the management of the center for granting them the opportunity to come and share the little donation with the children and their caretakers. He thanked the catholic community at the Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy who accepted to pull resources and fundraise for the donation. *"This is not a single Man's effort but the entire community at the Chaplaincy."* He thanked the center administration for the great work among Children with Disabilities and urged the community to continue supporting Children with Disabilities for it takes the entire community to raise a Child.

With reference to the story of the Good Samaritan, Rev. Fr. Eugene Kalyango, the Executive Director of the center, in his communication, on behalf of the center expressed sincere gratitude for the donation and Christmas party for the Children and their caretakers. According to him, the donation was timely as it was a solution to the two major pressing needs of the center, that is, lack of physiotherapy equipment and bedding

facilities for the children. He informed the congregation that the center currently provides services to over 600 Children with Disabilities from the Greater Masaka Region. Though not resident, the children are accommodated temporarily at the center as they undergo surgeries and physiotherapy after which they are taken back to their respective homes and follow up is done by a team of Good Samaritan Sisters and the rehabilitation team. *“Children have been sleeping on the floor and they have always been requested to travel to Kampala for physiotherapy, but now this challenge has been addressed. With this donation we shall be able to align services with our Vision of; Quality Service Delivery to People with Disabilities.”* He said.

Parents and Children with Disabilities expressed their heartfelt indebtedness to the center for rendering them a helping hand for they were overly stranded. Notably Mercy Kaaja, a 38 year old single mother suffering from breast cancer with a child, Wasswa Daniel suffering from Cerebral Palsy hailed the center for standing with her in hurdles to see that she lives a healthier life with her son. Kiyimba Ereneo(16 years old), whose legs are both paralyzed and now in a wheel chair, also thanked the rehabilitation team at the center and community volunteers for helping him undergo a series of surgeries at CoRSU Rehabilitation Hospital, Kisubi. Other children presented with success stories included Kaddu Emmanuel (6 years) who had Rickets and can now walk normally, Ndugwa Arnold (4 years) who could not sit and stand on his own but now can walk and is at school and Nakaayi Daphne (13 years) who had club feet, but after a series of surgeries and physiotherapy, she had started walking normally.

Quoting from the Scriptures, Mathew 25:40, Fr. Eugene Kalyango further expressed his joy and appreciation through a thanks giving traditional song that was enjoyed by the entire congregation.

Mr. Yiga Deo, the Board Chairperson of the center, in his communication, thanked the benefactors for the donation and Fr. Eugene Kalyango for having a passion to care for People with Disabilities especially the children. He thanked parents for bringing out their children and for not having neglected them. In his words he said, *“We do not have to only sympathize with these children, but we need to provide practical solutions to their problems. We should not concentrate on what they cannot do, but rather endeavor to find out their abilities and empower them in that direction.”*

The Guest of Honour, Ms. Maria Nagawa, the Masaka District Probation Officer, in her speech appealed to parents and the community at large, to avoid discriminating Children with Disabilities but rather support them and encourage them for they have equal rights like other normal children.

"...the old adage disability is not inability, should be observed always by parents and guardians such that people born with such impairments in any case should not be exposed to trauma and stigma, as if they are not to live" She mentioned that, In many areas of Greater Masaka, people with disabilities are still underlooked and are categorized as people of no importance leading to the wide spread perception that producing a disabled child as a curse, leading to many parents locking their children in houses not to be seen

in public. She warned parents with such phobia to stop it calling upon parents to be responsible while caring for children with disabilities.

She thanked Masaka Diocese for supporting the government through institutions like St. Vincent Pallotti's Initiative for People with Disabilities. She said that it is through such partnerships that the community has been able to access services which would rather be very difficult to bring to the people. She thanked the team from Centenary Bank, Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy, Mapeera for the donation and for bringing joy to Children with Disabilities and their parents. She thanked Fr. Eugene Kalyango, Sr. Gertrude Nantale and the entire team at the center for the devotion and commitment towards helping children with disabilities in the Greater Masaka region.

Children and parents enjoyed entertainment from Fr. Christmas and a meal that began with cutting of the Christmas cake was served to them, after which each one of them departed at leisure with a Christmas package.

PICTORIAL



Some of the children and parents who attended the function



Celebrating Mass with the Bishop Emeritus, Moroto Diocese, Rt. Rev. Henry Sentongo



Sr. Gertrude Nantale, the Rehabilitation Officer and Sister In-charge of the center giving her welcoming remarks.



Mr. Kimbowa Francis, delivering his speech on behalf of the Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy, Centenary Bank Head Office, Mapeera, Kampala.



Rev. Fr. Eugene Kalyango and Sr. Gertrude Nantale receiving the donated items on behalf of the center.



Sr. Gertrude Nantale receiving physiotherapy and occupational therapy equipment



Thanks giving traditional dance led by Fr. Eugene Kalyango



Cutting the Christmas Cake



A member of the Uganda Martyrs Chaplaincy serving a cake to mothers and their children