

Chaplain's Message: Spring 2011

My dear friends in Christ,

The women in Sudbury/Manitoulin Deanery are looking forward to welcoming you all to the Annual Meeting this year on May 30th – June 1st. Their planning team, in conjunction with the Diocesan Executive Committee is working hard to ensure that the meeting is worthwhile in content and provides opportunities for fellowship and great worship.

I am so pleased that the keynote speaker will be from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, an organization that funds community based projects that are “turning the tide of HIV and AIDS in Africa”. (Stephen Lewis Foundation website). Like yourselves I am very much looking forward to hearing about some of the initiatives that have been put into place since the plight of those living with and dying from HIV/AIDS was brought to our attention a decade ago. Statistics tell us that in our world today there are 33 million people living with HIV/AIDS. Two million people have already died from it. In one study in South Africa 32,861 women between the ages of 15-49 attending 1,447 antenatal clinics were tested for HIV/AIDS and 30% of them were found to be infected. These figures are staggering when one considers the implications for unborn children. The AIDS epidemic is far from over and so it is good to place it once more in the spotlight at our annual meeting. As you know, the Stephen Lewis Foundation is only one organization of many that supports those living with and dying from AIDS.

Since 2003 the Stephen Lewis Foundation has funded 300 projects in 15 countries and their focus is on women and girls who have been affected by this epidemic.

In particular, the Stephen Lewis Foundation focuses its assistance on :

- Women who are ill and struggling.*
- Orphans and other AIDS affected children.*
- Grandmothers caring for their orphan grandchildren.*
- Associations that are in place to support people living with AIDS/HIV.*

The Stephen Lewis Foundation sees education as key to lowering HIV/AIDS infections and strongly promotes the education of young girls. Every child has the right to education but in many countries in Africa, where AIDS is prevalent, school related expenses can often exceed the annual income of a family affected by HIV/AIDS. It comes down to this – children who can't pay, aren't accepted into schools. In large households heads-of-households have to choose amongst their children who will attend school, with the result that children orphaned by AIDS, particularly girl orphans – are often kept home to do housework and support the family. The latest edition of “Grassroots” the Newsletter for the Stephen Lewis Foundation reports that “girls who attend school are more likely to learn about HIV and less likely to have sex at an early

age.” (Grassroots, page 6) *By supporting the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation and other organizations that are working for those affected with HIV/AIDS, we can make a difference to the life of children in Africa and around the world. Many of us have children and grandchildren of our own and know the importance of education.*

“ Every AIDS orphan who completes his/her primary education represents a vote for a better future. It will be these children’s votes that eradicate corruption, improve the educational system, eliminate poverty and stop HIV/AIDS insidious destruction.” (Price of Stones by Twesilgye Jackson Kaguri)

It is often difficult for us to choose amongst all the really worthy causes that come to our attention every day which one/s to support. In the last year alone our world has witnessed several natural disasters of epic proportions, as well as the plight of our own indigenous people. We have limited resources and our parish members are weary from our many calls for donations to ‘yet another worthy cause’ – and they are all worthy of our prayers, our attention and our monetary donations. My hope is that as you prayerfully consider what organizations your groups might support this year, that HIV/AIDS be among them.

Many of you, like me, will have attended the World Day of Prayer Service on March 4th. The country spotlighted was Chile and the theme was “How Many Loaves Have You?” The readings were from 1 Kings 17 (the widow of Zarephath) and the sharing of the five loaves and two fish from Mark’s Gospel. We all wonder if we will have enough for ourselves and question whether the little we have to share with others can ever make a difference. The readings and the prayer service that day helped our group see that even though the amount we have might seem meager, in God’s hands, and with Jesus’ blessing it can become enough for all.

In the light of that prayer service and the approaching annual meeting and awareness of the ongoing needs in the area of HIV/AIDS, I invite you to prayerfully consider the loaves and fishes you have been given, the tiny amount of oil you have left. What can you share with those who have even less than you have?

I am looking forward to seeing you in May,

Anne

With God’s blessings.

From an African Call for Life

Busy, normal people: the world is here.

Can you hear it wailing, crying, whispering?

Litsen: the world is here. Don't you hear it.

Praying and sighing and groaning for wholeness?

Sighing and whispering: wholeness, wholeness, wholeness?

An arduous, tiresome, difficult journey towards wholeness...

The cry for bodily health and spiritual strength is echoed from person to person, from patient to doctor.

Our spirits cry out for the well being of the whole human family; the outcasts, victims of HIV/AIDS, orphans, homeless ones. Where are their relatives? Who is their father? Where is their mother? You can be their guardian.

We cry for the wholeness of humanity.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu