Fighting Poverty With Love

Support for the Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor

— Montego Bay and Highgate, Jamaica —

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10
Project Synopsis

Description
Provide for the basic living expenses of six Catholic nuns serving overseas near dangerous slums.

Purpose
Enable the Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor to continue their important mission of bringing Christ's love to the sick, poor and marginalized.

Location
The most impoverished areas in the Catholic Dioceses of Montego Bay and Highgate, Jamaica.

Cost
$16,000, or about $222 per month per person, will cover basic living expenses such as food, water, electricity, and transportation for a full year.

Highlights
• Jamaica is a country of great beauty, but also extreme pockets of poverty. The successful tourism industry has had little impact on the daily realities of life in crowded urban slums.
• The most vulnerable members of Jamaican society often suffer from neglect in a society torn apart by drugs, violence, and broken homes.
• The Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor is part of a Filipino religious order under the leadership of Mother Joan Clare. Mother Joan is from Jamaica, and for over a decade has answered the call of the Catholic Church to send her nuns to serve in that country.
• Cross Catholic Outreach is committed to covering basic living expenses for the sisters, so they can continue their life-changing mission — serving the most needy people in the Diocese through health care services, pastoral and campus ministry.
The Need

Poverty in Paradise

The Jamaica that tourists come to see is a serene, tropical paradise of sun-soaked beaches and sparkling blue waves. But just a short stroll from the paradise we see in the travel commercials resides a Jamaica that is hidden from view — a dangerous world of petty crime, drugs and gang violence.

Sr. Joy, a Filipino immigrant, knows first-hand this hidden Jamaica. The convent where Sr. Joy lives with fellow Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor is just a 10-minute walk from the Catholic health clinic where she volunteers, but she doesn’t dare travel there by foot.

For her and the other sisters now serving in Jamaica, the day ends at 3:00 in the afternoon — not because there isn’t work to do, but because it is simply too dangerous to venture out as dusk approaches. In these rough neighborhoods, violence, drug abuse and criminal activity are all around, but the dangers intensify at night.

The contrast between paradise and poverty can be shocking to those who have seen both. But while news pundits and politicians analyze the economic causes of Jamaican suffering — housing shortages, poor education, the high cost of living, and the like — Sr. Joy looks to soothe the underlying spiritual wounds. Every day, she confronts a culture plagued by broken families, abortion, drugs, and neglect, and offers her salve of love.

In a country where Catholics make up just two percent of the population, Sr. Joy knows her task is an uphill battle.

But with your generous support through Cross Catholic Outreach, the Franciscan Sisters have every intention of climbing that challenging mountain and showing Jamaica’s most vulnerable poor the true meaning of Christ’s love.
Ministry Description

Sr. Joy is one of six Filipino nuns of the Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor currently serving in Jamaica. Four of the sisters live in the Diocese of Montego Bay’s St. James Parish — Sr. Joy, Sr. Myrna, Sr. Marie and Sr. Angie. The other two sisters — Sr. Monica and Sr. Aura — live in the Diocese of Highgate’s St. Mary’s Parish.

The pastoral work they do includes training and working with the catechumens, running the RCIA program, organizing the Sunday school, holding prayer meetings, holding communion services when no priest is available, visiting shut-ins and providing communion to the Catholic homebound.

Here are some highlights of the Franciscan Sisters’ many ministerial duties:

**MONTEGO BAY**

**School Ministries**

- *Chetwood Primary School* ~ Sr. Angie spends most of her time at this state-supported school, ministering to poor, at-risk boys and girls.
- *Mount Alvernia Prep School* ~ Sr. Angie also supports this private parochial school. Of note is her success with the St. Francis Kids for Christ Club.
- *Mount Alvernia High School* ~ Sr. Marie spends a lot of her time working at this school. Her biggest success story is the school’s Franciscan Youth For Christ Club!

**Healthcare Ministries**

- *Brenda Stafford Medical Clinic* ~ Sr. Joy and Sr. Marie both work at this much-needed clinic. During a typical month, more than 2,000 patients come through its doors.
- *Hope Hospice* ~ A registered nurse, Sr. Myrna serves elderly patients here, which is located next door to the Brenda Stafford Clinic.

**HIGHGATE**

**School Ministries**

- *Marymount High School* ~ Sr. Monica leads the Catholic Cluster Club, where she teaches catechism with the involvement of the local priest, Fr. James.
- *Preston Hill Primary School* ~ Sr. Monica is also in charge of the Catholic Cluster Club at this primary school, located about 45 minutes from the convent.

**Home-Based Care Ministries**

- *St. Mary’s Parish* ~ In this parish, there are 15 shut-ins spread out among six communities. Sr. Monica and Sr. Aura visit them as often as possible.
Reaching out to Young People

“I don’t know how she does it, but Sr. Marie has these girls eating out of her hand,” says Therese Cherian, principal of Mount Alvernia High School in Montego Bay. “She has been able to form their spirits. The girls flock around her.”

The bond between Sr. Marie and the girls she works with at Mount Alvernia High School is supremely evident. They look to her as more than a religious sister. She has become a trusted “big sister” — a confidante that they can turn to in times of trouble and a mentor with whom they can share their hopes and dreams.

For the past three years, Sr. Marie has led the Franciscan Youth for Christ Club. The club used to be known as the Catholic Club, but participation was extremely low since Jamaica is a largely Protestant country. Sr. Marie changed the club’s name, encouraged non-Catholics to attend, and now the group is thriving beyond everyone’s expectations.

Some of the girls in the club come from difficult home situations. But thanks to the leadership of Sr. Marie, they praise the Lord for his many blessings. They gather together at the school, sing, pray and volunteer after hours at hospice centers and homes for the elderly. Most — even those who are not Catholic — attend Mass every Sunday. Since joining the club, three have received the sacraments and have joined the Catholic Church.

Sr. Monica leads a similar Christian outreach club at Marymount High School in Highgate. Her Catholic Cluster Club, now called “Cluster Club” to encourage non-Catholics to attend, includes the involvement of the local priest, Fr. James. Her ecumenical approach has reaped great rewards, with club membership reaching 100 out of a school population of 989.

Sr. Marie says being Catholic in Jamaica is not easy because there is a lot of misinformation among Protestants and non-believers alike. Many Jamaicans also have a strong distrust for the clergy and don’t fully understand the roles priests and nuns play in the community.

Considering Protestants in Jamaica outnumber Catholics by 30 to 1, it might seem hopeless for Catholic nuns like Sr. Marie and Sr. Monica to prevail under the circumstance. But God is supreme, and the Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor are indeed making an impact through their outreach among the young people — most of whom are at-risk and in desperate need of the Church’s message of hope.

Through your support of this Cross Catholic Outreach project, you can also play a role in this vital work of mercy.
Providing Compassionate Care

“I have no pain, no bed sores, and don’t have to take medicine. God loves me so much!” says Mr. White, one of the many patients cared for by Sr. Myrna at the Hope Hospice in Montego Bay. A registered nurse, Sr. Myrna has been serving patients at Hope Hospice for 10 years. For Mr. White, she is more than a competent caregiver. She is a friend.

“Sr. Myrna is a good friend of Christ,” he says. “She treats me as a brother.”

Mr. White has been paralyzed ever since he fell out of a breadfruit tree in 2004 and broke his back, severely damaging his spinal cord. He says, “I had this accident without pain. I hear a lot of people that cry from pain and say take me out of this world. The only pain I have had is from a bad tooth!”

Mr. White isn’t the only hospice patient benefiting from the kind, benevolent care of Sr. Myrna. Few of these patients receive visits from family members, and so Sr. Myrna has become their new family. A simple conversation lights up the faces of the dying mothers, fathers, sons and daughters who are accustomed to being ignored.

As she makes her rounds at the hospice, a 94-year-old man named James greets her with a spiritual song. Another elderly patient shares witness about how much he loves Jesus, while a third patient plays a soulful tune on his harmonica.

This outreach of love is Sr. Myrna’s calling, as it is the calling of every true Catholic to emulate the heart of God. As the Bible teaches us: “God will never forget the needy …” (Psalm 9:18) — and neither should we.

Please help us ensure that the work of these precious sisters continues!
Help Now!

The Compassionate Franciscan Sisters of the Poor have dedicated their lives to serving God and others. They live humbly and simply, far away from their homes and families, dependent on the generosity of caring Catholics to provide for their basic needs.

Cross Catholic Outreach is committed to providing living expenses for the sisters as they continue their important work in Jamaica, but we cannot do this without your help.

**Your gift to Cross Catholic will go towards the sisters’ basic needs,** such as food, water, electricity and transportation, so they can fulfill their responsibilities and continue to be a blessing to the poor and in the Montego Bay and Highgate Dioceses.

With your support, the sisters will bring hope to men, women, and children who have only known the despair of Jamaica’s urban slums. They will overcome violence, poverty, and societal dysfunction with the life-changing love of Christ.

Please consider giving a gift toward the sisters’ daily living expenses, while they pour out their lives as a sacrifice for the poor, the sick, and the marginalized.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Our Promise to You!

Proceeds from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred during the current calendar year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.