



St. Francis Children's Care Organization

"Hope - sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible"

Christmas 2009

Dear Friends and family,

I must begin with an apology. I have not been the best of communicators these last months but this time I can lay the blame on changing weather patterns in a country that is 85% agricultural and where having timely and sufficient rainfall is paramount. This year that did not happen, the rains were late and insufficient resulting in pockets of famine in some rural areas. The last four months also saw severe rationing of electricity and water. Along with exhausting my supply of Right Guard, Internet use was very limited. On a positive note my health situation has stabilized. I will return to the States for chemo treatment every six months for another eighteen months or more.

Another bump in the road occurred in July, when my e-mail address was hacked which caused many of you to receive spurious emails asking you to bail me out of dire circumstances. Fortunately, my friends and relatives saw through the scam, and to my knowledge, no money was sent. My brother Patrick had the best take on it: "I knew it wasn't Jack when the scammer said that he would repay the loan".

Because of the devaluation of the Ethiopian dollar due to the global recession, our food costs have skyrocketed which has made our daily hot meals for the children that much more expensive. At the same time the families made urgent pleas that we extend the school year because they didn't have the resources to give their children one simple hot meal every day. In fact, one in five families in the country has great difficulty in providing sufficient food for the household.

Extending the school year would normally create very unhappy schoolchildren elsewhere. Not so in our schools in Shero Meda and Piazza Centers. One indication of the continuing success of our program is that our children are very unhappy to miss even one day of class. Therefore, as the families requested, we extended the school year to the end of September when our 2009 graduation of 76 children took place.

This school year, as has been our custom for all new intakes, priority was given to children whose families have been seriously affected by the AIDS pandemic, children who are orphans and children from single parent families. Because of the still prevalent stigma of AIDS, we do not identify those children who are affected one way or another. Because of the desperation of many families to enroll their children, we have agreed to increase the new first year group to 100, giving us a total of 310 children for the 2009-10 school year.

There is an African proverb that says, "If you take a sip of water, you should remember the origin of the stream." All of us in this sad part of the world,

particularly the children in the program, remember in our daily prayers all of you who are a significant part of our family. I'm also reminded that at Christmas we see in the Holy Family that God blesses the social institution of the family. Christmas is all about family and we consider you our loving extended family and give thanks on a daily basis for your support. In these times when all are feeling the effects of a troubled economy, your generosity is a beacon of hope to the impoverished families of Addis Ababa.

In closing, because of our real need to expand our donor partner base during these difficult times, I would ask you to seriously consider reaching out to friends and family who might be likely to support Addis Hope if only they knew about it. You might encourage them to visit our web site: www.addis-hope.com.

I would very much enjoy hearing from you. My new (unhacked) email address is flynnfsc2@gmail.com.

I wish you a blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year.

Brother Gregory Flynn, FSC (Jack)

P.S. On a more personal note, there is a real scarcity of good reading material. I am something of a bibliophile and would enjoy receiving any book you send. Whatever we receive is eventually passed around to others with equal appreciation. Magazine subscriptions would also be most welcome. For subscriptions, my P.O. Box is 796, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. For books, P.O. Box 2454 is more convenient. Kindly let me know if you are interested (flynnfsc2@gmail.com)