



# MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

## DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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### The Wondrous Gift



little town of Bethlehem,

and Rabinal and Ayene,  
Mexicali and Ocosingo,  
Qaraqosh and Nome,

...in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light.

The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee tonight.

Dear Mission Friends:

It happens every year at this time: The beginning of the liturgical cycle, the season of Advent—a time to prepare our hearts to commemorate God's greatest gift to us, the arrival of his Son in that little town of Bethlehem, a son whom he chose to send as a newborn baby, helpless and vulnerable, totally dependent on his humble parents to nurture and foster and protect him. **But that tiny bundle would grow up to make the biggest impact the world has ever known.**



From Murillo's *Adoration of the Shepherds*, c. 1650

As prophesied by Micah, "But you, O Bethlehem..., *who are little to be among the clans of Judah*, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler of Israel" (5:2).

This Advent, especially, I am reminded of the quote, "**Babies are pure potential.**" Charles Osgood, the folksy but wise reporter and commentator, once said, "Babies are pure potential. You pick up a little baby and you're amazed by how light it is, but you feel also that you're holding the future, the earth and the sky, the sun and the moon, and all of it, everything, is brand new.

"Babies help us to put the changing world into perspective, too. Changing the world has to wait when it's time to change the baby!" And poet Carl Sandburg wrote, "A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on. Babies are pure potential."

I'm not sure who said it first—it's been quoted so much in countless articles and on coffee mugs and t-shirts and greeting cards that it's lost its impact—but if we do stop to ponder its meaning, we may find the strength and hope and light we need to guide us through the dark clouds of Covid and division, fear and uncertainty.

I have a new grandchild, born in October, and I must admit that, occasionally during the months awaiting his birth, I questioned the wisdom of bringing a baby into this unsettled and unsettling world.

Now that he's here, of course—a tiny bundle of innocence, goodness, *pure potential*—I can't imagine this world without him. Never mind the joy he has already given to my family, the smiles and happy distractions that only multiply daily, but I can't wait to receive the gifts from the boy he will become.

In our mission towns, and in all “little towns” everywhere, every day, babies—tiny bundles of pure potential—are being born, generating hope in the midst of darkness, bringing the possibility for a shift, no matter how small, toward gentleness and compassion and love. All babies come with such power in their tiny fingers alone.

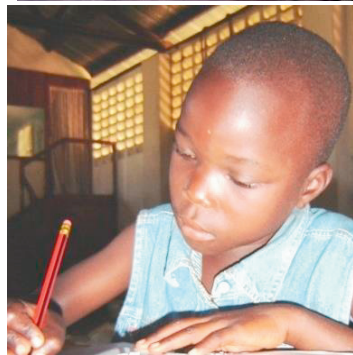
In his third encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, written during the Covid pandemic, Pope Francis suggests the importance of allowing everyone to achieve their individual potential. He writes, “... political systems must ... structure society in such a way that everyone has a chance to contribute his or her own talents and efforts.” He advocates “acknowledging the dignity of each human person...Let us dream, then, ...as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, *brothers and sisters all* [or ‘fratelli tutti’].”

This unusual Christmas season, may the joy and hope bestowed by the newborn Babe, and babies everywhere, help to ease your worries.

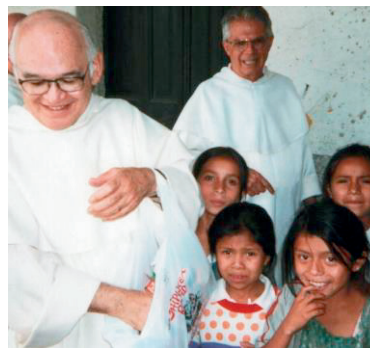
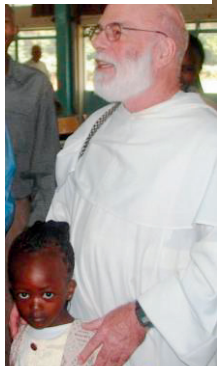
*How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is given,  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive  
him still,  
The dear Christ enters in.*

Peace,  
Lesley Warnshuis

In our mission areas, our primary focus has always been on the children, especially those who have been orphaned or abused or whose parents are unable to provide them with adequate care or education. Thank you for recognizing the baby Jesus and His humble parents in the poor and needy whom we—with your generous help—currently serve or support in Mexico, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, and Alaska. Enjoy these glimpses (including some oldies) into their lives and hearts.



Let the little children come to me... The reign of God belongs to such as these (Luke 18:16-17).





The least one among you is the greatest (Luke 9:48).

