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Table of Contents and From the Editor

Gerald Fitzgerald

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Great Needs, Devoted Labourers ... Limited Funds

"Summertime and the livin' is easy." My office is air-conditioned. On the way home from work today I plan to drop into a friend's place to enjoy an hour in the pool. And this weekend I am off to Georgian Bay where the Archdiocese owns a nice cottage near a lovely beach.

So, I am contented? Well, yes and no. After the very long and cold winter we suffered in Toronto this year, I feel I deserve the comfort and relaxation that a glorious Canadian summer can bring. But I am haunted by the privations our missionaries endure and so casually accept. They never complain about their living conditions in their letters which focus on pleading for help for the people whom they live among, serve and love. It is from visits to our missions that I learn of the hardships in their daily lives.

I think of Pat O'Toole and Dida Wario living in the Nairobi slum Makuru. I visited this Spiritan mission a few years ago and I will never forget the few hours I spent there. The smell of abject poverty, a mixture of smoke from the small fires of burning thrash and the stench of human excrement from the open sewers are far worse than the 36° temperature and the total lack of shade. Yet Pat and Dida soldier on.

And I think of David Conway in the semi-arid Pocot Hills of Kenya. His camel project is providing milk and even a little income for the local families, plagued as they are by tribal fighting, drought and disease. But David refuses to accept a transfer to a less-demanding mission.

To many Canadians the Dominican Republic brings memories of luxury hotels and pristine beaches. My visit to Juan de Herrera in the interior, near the border with Haiti, left me with memories of stark poverty. The Spiritan team lives in a very cramped hot apartment in the church sacristy while serving the people in the town and the neighboring slums.

And in the steamy jungle of central French Guyana, Edward Okorie ministers to the scattered communities of Amerindians and Maroons along the banks of the Maroni River. I think of the heat, the isolation, the lack of electricity and refrigeration in these outposts.

When I compare our missionaries' lives to mine I think of the rich man and the eye of a needle. All I can do is send them funds from my superfluity for the projects they have initiated to improve the quality of life of the people with whom they identify so closely.

The number of teams we Spiritans have working in mission territories is increasing. And the locations chosen for these new ventures are where the people are most in need. Calls for greater support come from these new ventures on a regular basis. Thanks to your generosity we can do something for most of them. However their needs are greater than our ability to respond.

I would ask you to remember our Spiritan missionaries, priests and lay people alike, by donating money for their work. In doing this you will be part of the Church's missionary arm which reaches out to the poorest and most oppressed. And you will be accumulating, for yourself and all dearest to you, 'treasure in Heaven.'

Gerry FitzGerald, CSSp

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