

The Art of 'Mercying'

December 12, 2015

Floods and Slums:

March 2015 Chile floods brought in \$1.5 billion in economic loss to the nation; China \$3.2 billion in June and July. In October, Southeast US and Mid-Atlantic incurred \$2 Billion Economic loss. And now we see India & Sri Lanka are facing the worst floods in years in November as the floods brought in \$3 billion in Economic loss.

One survey stated that there were 400 flood victims who lost their lives and millions lost homes and belongings in India. Chennai is the fourth largest city in India where the most damage occurred. Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi are the other largest cities in India. All the cities in India have a large population living in the slums. A typical slum dweller has a one room shack with no sanitary facility and no human living condition in them, let alone the situation of women!!!

When I was a seminarian in one of the cities in India, Bangalore, we the seminarians from different religious orders came together once a month to clean slums with the slum-dwellers. We would clean the slums whole day from 9 am to 6 pm and ate what they gave us. It was not easy! There were all kinds of people dwelling in slums as most of them came to the cities looking for jobs and nowhere to stay. They belong to all religion and are prone to all diseases including AIDS and HIV.

I have worked in different parts of India and have firsthand experience of slums in many parts of India and the worst slums in my opinion are situated in all four major cities. I have worked in slums in Chennai also. There are religious organizations and Non-Profit organizations working for the slum dwellers especially the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) in Chennai City in places like Basin Bridge, Vyasarpadi, Nochikuppam etc; The Marianist Brothers working for Rag pickers in Bangalore to name a few.

Dr. C Chandramouli IAS wrote a paper titled 'Slums in Chennai' in December 2003. He said, "A little more than one fourth of the Chennai population lives in slums. Slums in Chennai are greatly disadvantaged as far as quality of housing and availability of basic amenities like drinking water, electricity, latrines, drainage, non-polluting fuels and the like. Any improvements in the standards of public health will have to start in the Slums."

Now in 2015 the total population of Chennai is 4,828,858 (4.8 million). It has 242 slums. Mumbai and Kolkata manage to have 30% to 40% of the total population living in slums. If this is the case, 30% of the now existing population of Chennai would have 1,448,657 people living in slums today.

India and Corruption:

India has to face a lot of challenges with the huge population not so far from China and one of the main challenges being corruption. In 2009 December, out of 524 parliament members, 120 of them were accused of crimes. India witnessed huge corruption charges recently with 2G spectrum scam of \$25

billion, Commonwealth Games scam of \$10 Billion, Adarsh Housing Society Scam of \$1.86 billion and Coal Mining Scam of \$28 billion, Mining Scam in Karnataka, Cash for vote scam to name a few.

The India & Sri Lanka Apostolate:

With a huge population, and with a huge slum population and the corrupt Government these ordinary poor and destitute people had to face the 8th most expensive natural disaster in the world in 2015. Almost all the slum dwellers lost everything, some of them their very lives. Though there is not much of International news or very little international news about this disaster, social media has taken this seriously in many respects.

The Diocese of Metuchen has people of India from all over India. As there are continuous attempts made by the India-Sri Lanka Apostolate to bring about a common forum to have a unified voice for India and Sri Lanka, challenging moments such as this - a natural calamity - could bring a lot of good for our mother church. Our unity could save lives!

Do not forget the fact that this could happen in Goa; this could happen in Mangalore or in Kochi. We as people of India and Sri Lanka should stand up for our country as one people. The people of Chennai and Cuddalore need your support. Moments like this need a lot of discerning as our Pope opened those doors of Mercy and taught us that the door is in fact Christ. We learn the art of showing mercy through Christ. The deeper we walk through the door, the deeper we journey through the heart of Jesus, the deeper we understand and appreciate the art of MERCYING.

What can or should we do?

Fr. Antony Arockiadoss

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Diocese of Metuchen

More info on Slums in India <http://www.walkthroughindia.com/lifestyle/major-slum-areas-in-top-indian-cities/>

My plan

We plan to help 1000 families.

Three Diocesan parishes will give us the contacts of 400 families.

- 1. Our Lady of Health Parish, Laxmipuram, Chennai. Fr. Clement Balasamy, Pastor.*
- 2. St. Anthony's Parish, Puzhal, Chennai. Fr. Johnson, Pastor.*
- 3. Resurrection Parish, Moolakadai, Chennai. Fr. Henry Felix, Pastor.*

Two Religious parishes will get 600 families.

- 1. Infant Jesus Church, Chengalpattu, Fr. Alexander, Franciscan Capuchin Fathers.*
- 2. Mary Help of Christians Parish, Basin Bridge, Chennai, Fr. Edward Michael, Salesians of Don Bosco*

Budget

1. Rehabilitation Donation

Since we are focusing on slum dwellers, knowing for a fact that they lost everything, an ordinary rehabilitation donation is necessary.

Each Family will receive a Rs 10,000 (\$150). This includes basic repair around the house, and getting started from the scratch.

For 1000 families we need \$150,000.

2. Relief Donation

Relief Donation is Rs 5000 (\$75). This includes a bag with rice, and food items and other necessary things for a short period of time. (For 1000 - \$75,000)

We can do this in \$50 pack also. (For 1000 - \$50,000)

3. House repair for select families.

House repair for the most affected is expensive and we can only help a few. There were a few requests of these kinds also.

Anywhere between \$300 to \$500

TAMIL NADU
Flood Affected Areas



LEGEND

- State Boundary
- District Boundary
- State Capital
- District Headquarter