

Serving the resurrected Christ in his children

There are over 106 million people in the Philippines. More than 81 percent of those people are Catholic. And as many as 1 in 3 children under 5 years old are malnourished. A charity with humble origins in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis has been fighting for years to save those children.

Risen Savior Missions is an all-volunteer run and managed charity. They proudly proclaim that 100 percent of any donation goes toward helping and saving starving children. There are over 10,000 volunteers in the Philippines cooking and serving the food that Risen Savior Missions provides, and it is the largest American charity working with the Catholic Church in the Philippines.

Since 2006, when they first began shipping food to the Philippines, they have provided 87 million meals. Working with the approval of the local bishop, Risen Savior Missions operates in 52 dioceses in that country, and has been asked by Cardinal Luis A. Tagle, archbishop of Manila, to expand into the remaining 38 dioceses.

Tangible results

This apostolate has grown from the most modest of seeds over several decades. Jerry and Barb Krosnowski owned a travel tour business, organizing trips for groups only, as small as 40 and as large as 600. The business was very successful, but the state of their charitable giving began to nag at the Krosnowskis.

“I got tired of sending my money away to charities and not knowing how it was spent,” Jerry Krosnowski told Our Sunday

Visitor. "I'm very frugal with how I spend my money in missionary work." This frugality and attention to detail, and a profound desire to ensure that every cent was expended in real work for the mission, would come to serve him well.

He was interested in ensuring how the money he donated was used and having concrete results from the donations. After debating on how best to do this, in 2000 the Krosnowski's formed their own private foundation, the Sonshine Foundation. Some examples of the work accomplished by the foundation are a well in a village in Tanzania and another in Haiti.

"There was a tangible result," Jerry said. "The people had clean drinking water. They had been getting sick; there was rampant illness they were contracting from the water they had on hand. The wells allowed them to get uncontaminated water."

As the foundation evolved, the Krosnowski's realized they needed it to become a public charity, because the need was massively greater than they realized. They saw a great vacuum that had to be filled, a great need that had to be satisfied.

"Going out into the field," Jerry said, "we realized there is really no one out there. All the missionaries that used to be in the field, a huge percentage of them have retired, and no one has taken their place."

Starvation epidemic

With the success of their charity, they changed the name to Risen Savior Missions in 2006 as a way to better reflect their mission of glorifying God and his Church. A Filipino doctor invited them to come see the situation in the Philippines. He told them the people were starving. Jerry Krosnowski was incredulous at first, as he had not seen any news coverage of a starvation epidemic in the Philippines. But once he saw firsthand how bad the situation was, he knew he had to do something.

“As we went out there, I just wanted to help one little spot, one little island – even one little village on one little island,” Jerry Krosnowski said. Traveling around the Philippines, they covered about 1,500 land miles over many islands. They were shocked and appalled at how many children were suffering and dying.

As he traveled around the country, Jerry would bring food that was donated to the charity. He would stop in villages with malnourished people and bring the food in, cook it, prepare it, and serve it to the starving children. In every case, he noticed a trend. These towns were filled with children who had not eaten in perhaps a day or two, who would line up and salivate while the food was prepared. They would get their cup of this highly nutritious food, blow on it to cool it off, and immediately begin feeding it to a younger child. They would give up the food for themselves in order to feed those who were younger. And they did this as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“It hit me that we have to do something to save a generation of children this loving,” Jerry said.

Help Support the Mission

Through about 1,500 holistic, programmed feeding sites around the Philippines, Risen Savior Missions:



Courtesy photo

- Continue annually to help over 100,000 starving and malnourished children of the Philippines become healthy
- Have shipped 83 million meals in the last 12 years
- Have reversed malnutrition in more than 1 million children

To donate, visit: risensaviormissions.org

Servants in the field

There were three main objectives for Krosnowski from the earliest days of his work in the Philippines: first, to save as many children as possible from malnutrition and starvation; second, to evangelize them; third, to return to America and sound the alarm that these people are in need. Jerry has coined a phrase: “God doesn’t need any more advisers. He needs servants to go out in the mission fields and lovingly serve.”

Risen Savior Missions’ work for the poor in the Philippines consists of five main areas: food for starving and malnourished children; clean potable water to drink; facilitating the building of Christian schools and providing educational supplies; assistance for mission teams that serve the poor medically; and fostering Christian spiritual development.

“We listen to the people, we gain their confidence,” said Jerry. “We give them values and strengthen their faith, teach

them about the sacraments.” This is the focus of the first year in a given area; in the second year, they teach about sanitation and hygiene; they teach the women about their natural cycle. The third year focuses on livelihood, how to help people overcome poverty and grow to be more self-sufficient. This includes educating them about their local agriculture, teaching them various, numerous skills.

“The food is the start,” said Jerry. “And the food transforms their lives. We feed the malnourished kids, and mom and dad if necessary, and now they have time to learn things, they don’t have to beg. They’re not getting sick.”

Resurrection for children

The meals Risen Savior Missions provide are a complete meal casserole consisting of rice, soy and dried vegetables that are packed with 20 vitamins and minerals. They are designed to eliminate severe cases of starvation-malnutrition in children, infants, pregnant mothers, lactating mothers, tuberculosis patients and starving senior citizens.

They also ship two different life-saving potato-based meals, donated by Feed My Starving Children to Risen Savior Missions, one of which is designed to feed infants if their mothers cannot lactate sufficiently. The other is to stop and reverse cases of diarrhea, giving them enough time before they perish from the huge loss of bodily fluids to make it to a doctor or hospital for proper medical care and treatment.

Nearly all of the children they serve fully recover from the effects of malnutrition and are able to walk, smile, laugh, sing, dance, play, return to school and regain their health.

One of the first children helped, a boy named Raymond, was thrown into a dumpster at 8 years old because he was almost dead from severe malnutrition and advanced stages of tuberculosis. He was dug out by another woman, a scavenging,

poor mother of seven, living in an 8-foot-by-8-foot shanty next to a deep drainage ditch that carries polluted runoff wastewater from Manila. She carried him home to live with her and then to the Risen Savior Missions feeding site in Muntinlupa, a suburb of Manila.

Within six months he fully recovered, and today, a decade later, he serves other poor children the life-saving food at the same feeding site area he was first brought to.

Jerry Krosnowski sees God in every aspect of their service and notes that people encounter Jesus among the poorest of the poor. "It is there, in communication with these poor, little, innocent children, we learn how to dialog with God," he said.

Paul Senz writes from Oregon.