

Inspiring Generosity

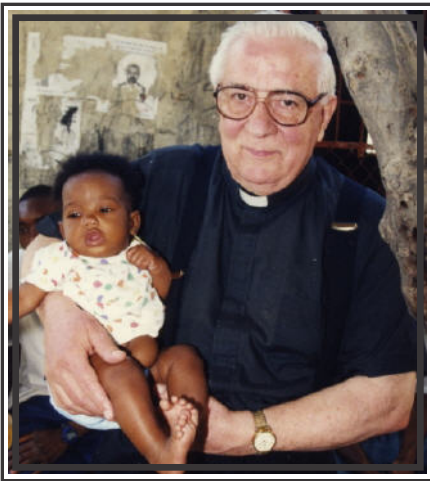


Spotlight: Why Father Bernie Couldn't Let it Go

<http://social.razoo.com/2012/09/spotlight-why-father-bernie-couldn%E2%80%99t-let-it-go/>

September 14th, 2012 By Ifdy Perez - Washington, DC Razoo -Community Manager

“You can’t walk away from misery and do nothing.”



Those were the words of Father Bernard Reiser, a priest from Coon Rapids, MN who in 1996 went to Haiti for the first time, and was afflicted by the poverty he saw.

“I have seen slums in China, Egypt, and Mexico City. None of them compare to the tragic realities of the slums outside Port-au-Prince,” he said.

Father Bernie began collecting funds to send to Port-au-Prince, taking mission trips and visiting schools. His efforts soon formed an organization, [Reiser Relief](#), which strengthened and lengthened his goodwill efforts in Haiti.

The Foundation Grows

In 2005, Reiser Relief was able to [bring clean water](#) to Cite Soleil, “the poorest slum in the Western Hemisphere,” and, according to the Reiser Relief website, a city that infrequently receives aid from other organizations.

Electricity and running water don’t exist in Cite Soleil, but Father Bernie’s organization bought a truck, and began delivering clean drinking water to the neighborhood, distributing it bucket by



Photo Courtesy of Reiser Relief

bucket. They deliver water six days a week to three routes, 52 weeks a year.

The families work to make sure the water lasts until the next day.

“People come up to the truck with their buckets, we fill them up, and they take it back to their homes,” says Kim Maciej, Father Bernie’s great niece who recently joined the Reiser Relief team.

In addition to the water truck, Reiser Relief is very active in improving the education in Cite Soleil and neighboring city Lespinasse. Few families are able to afford the \$50 month to send their children to school, so Reiser pays the teachers’

salary—approximately \$70 a month—and has supplied benches, desks, water, and food so the children have better conditions for learning.

Between the two schools, about 1,000 children are served.

Reiser Relief also looks out for those left without someone to care for them: the orphans and elderly.

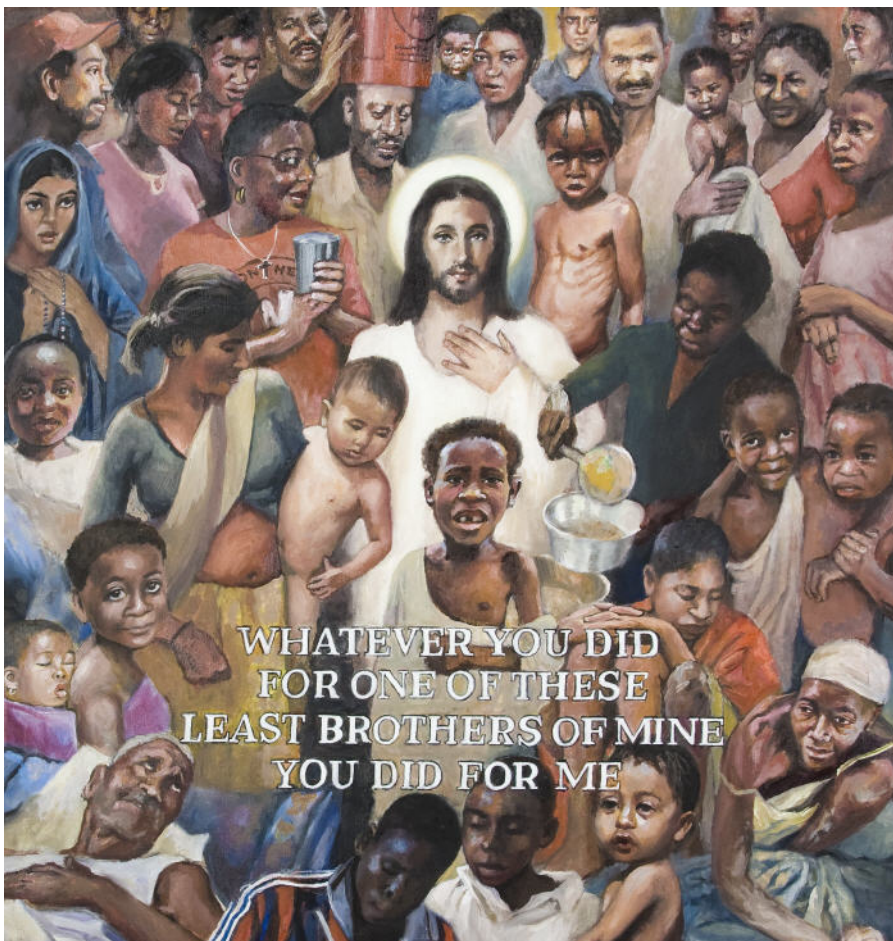
Worth the Risk

Cite Soleil and Lespinasse are rough neighborhoods for its residents, and more so for outsiders.

“You can’t get the food directly into Haiti. It’s dangerous. When people get desperate, they do



Photo Courtesy of Reiser Relief



Haiti Painting by Artist Mark Sanislo - close friend of Fr Reiser

whatever they can to survive,” Kim says. “We can’t just walk around with a box of food. We have to distribute it in a safe way, with protection, and get it in the hands of the right people.”

The Reiser Relief staff works with locals to find places where they can deliver water and food safely, so no one is in danger when on their way to their daily sustenance. Many times, children are the ones carrying food and water back to their homes.

Another Reason to Keep Going

Two of Kim’s cousins went to Haiti this past June, and there they met 18 year-old Catina. She is from a family of eight children—she’s the second to last sibling—and attends the Terre Promise primary school in Cite Soleil.

When the 2010 earthquake hit, her parents couldn’t farm their land anymore; it was completely wrecked. They had to spend money to fix their house, which meant they couldn’t afford to send Catina to college.

But she wasn’t about to give up.

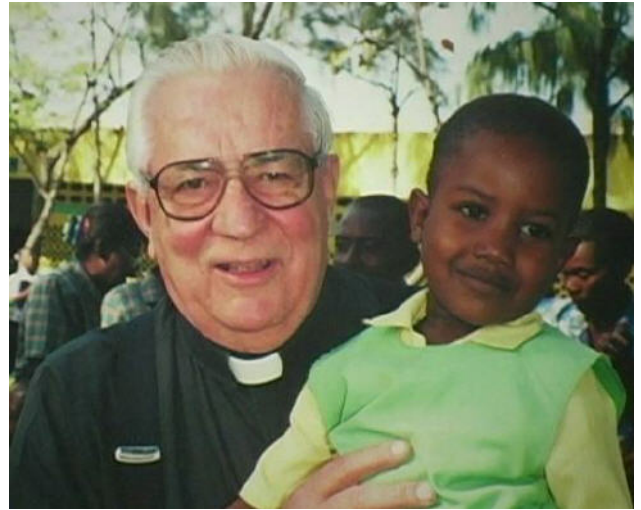
Catina went to the director at Terre Promise, and asked what she could do to get to college. She then sent a personal letter to Reiser Relief. They were so moved by her commitment and determination to get an education, Reiser Relief collected the money and agreed to pay for her studies the Universite Caraibe. “We want to do this for more kids,” Kim says.



Catina Charles, Photo Courtesy of Reiser Relief

Not Letting it Go

Father Bernie couldn't let it go, and thankfully he didn't, because his actions are now serving hundreds of children living in extreme poverty. He continued working in communities like Cite Soleil and Lespinasse up until his death in December 2011. When he passed away, approximately 7,000 people attended his funeral. His love was so deep, and his service was so much, Lespinasse named their primary school after him: Reiser Heights.



Though not famous, Father Bernard Reiser was a true source of inspiration. His selflessness and dedication to serve those less fortunate has helped kids like Catina not have to conform to the burden of poverty.

Will you be like Father Bernie? Will you hang onto an issue and do something to fix it?

If you'd like to find out more about [Reiser Relief](#), [visit their website](#) to find out how you can [support them with a donation](#) or join them in their [upcoming mission trip](#).



Haitian children with the President of Reiser Relief Ann Brau - niece of Father Reiser