



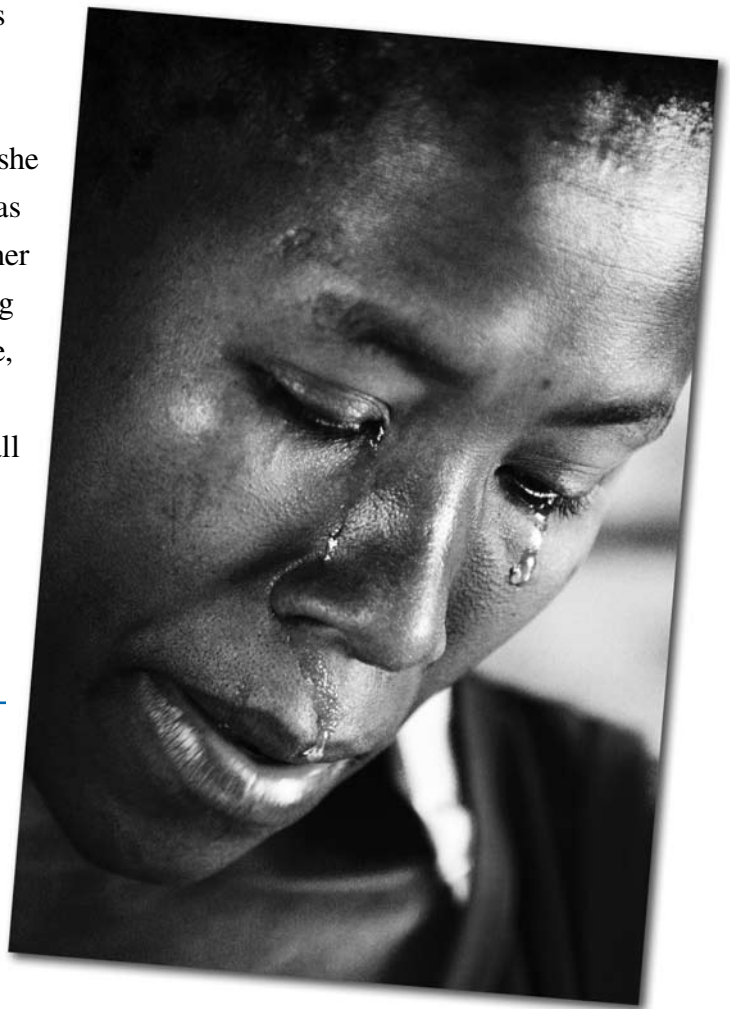
"...every time this happens,
you lose a piece of
your heart."

Dear Friend in Christ,

Francis Vargas feels like misery is following her.

Born into abject poverty in Haiti, she migrated to the Dominican Republic as a teenager after her mother died and her stepmother became abusive. In fleeing the poorest country in our hemisphere, the hopeful young woman sought a better life across Haiti's border. But all that Francis has found is more grief.

Now a young mother, Francis lost two children over the past four years because of the deadly effects of severe malnutrition. The harsh conditions of the region have resulted in devastating health consequences for her family. Currently, Francis worries about the fate of her 6-year-old daughter and her infant son.



When we visited the family, little Janet and her 1-year-old brother Francisco hadn't eaten all day. Their father had just returned with ten small bananas that would have to last the family indefinitely.

Her family's lack of food visibly saps Francis of any vitality; she lives in constant agony. As she listlessly reaches for the pot of boiling plantains, the distraught mother

knows that this meager portion won't be enough to satisfy her two young children.



“When we have it, we eat. When we don't, we don't eat,” Francis laments. When her children cry for food, Francis cries. And when the family's food supply runs out, Francis attempts to ease her children's hunger by offering them water with salt.

“My tears have been my food day and night...” (Psalm 42:4a)

This is why your support for severely undernourished families is so crucial. Your gift for food not only has the power to save lives — it can also restore hope to those who live daily with overwhelming suffering and tragedy.

Time is precious for children on the brink of starvation. I cannot bear the thought of a mother losing another child due to a lack of basic foods that are in abundance for us. The food that could fill this empty lunch sack would be a godsend to hungry children and their families. Please, help me provide lifesaving nourishment to those in need.

Uneducated and desperately poor, Francis' husband Luis has no choice but to attempt to work the desolate land that surrounds them. Occasionally, the frustrated father can harvest beans, corn or plantains.

But when the Dominican countryside suffers from its frequent droughts, the yields are few and far between. During these difficult times, Luis doesn't have enough money to buy food. Two to three weeks regularly pass in which he's unable to earn 100 pesos — roughly the equivalent of \$3 in the U.S.

Adding to the family's troubles, the most recent loss of a child has propelled Francis into a web of depression and sorrow. Little Altagracia was 2-and-a-half years old when she succumbed to anemic conditions on Christmas Day. During the three-week period before Altagracia passed away, Francis and her husband rushed the sick little girl back and forth to clinics before their worst nightmare was realized.

Any energy Francis now musters is spent worrying about her 1-year-old son Francisco and his current series of illnesses. Meanwhile, Luis combs the barren land for any signs of hope for feeding his children. With each of Francisco's congested coughs or hungry cries, his parents endure haunting memories of the recent past... and intense fear of the immediate future.

"We ask God for this to never happen to us again," said Luis, kneeling with his wife in front of their children's gravesites. "Because every time this happens, you lose a piece of your heart."

The family regularly honors their late children by visiting the gravesites, located in a cemetery near the family's shack. With hands folded, Francis kneels at the side of her children's graves. She begs God to help her and



her two surviving children avoid any more difficulties. But in the distance, young Janet holds tightly to her sickly brother.

A mother's love for her children is without bounds — and so the depth of this mother's agony for her young ones is unimaginable.

Your compassionate gift today can help bring lifesaving food to malnourished families like Francis', and can help dry the tears of suffering mothers who fear for their children's

lives. Every gift of \$9 will feed four hungry children for an entire month. Imagine — you can provide lifesaving nourishment to innocent little ones on the brink of starvation. You can help end the misery of those who suffer.

over please



“You will forget your misery; it will be like water flowing away.” (Job 11:16, NLT)

The simplest of gifts can make a world of difference to the truly destitute. Please, help Food For The Poor end the misery that plagues suffering families by sharing your blessings with those in need today.

May God bless you for your compassion for hungry children and their families.

A servant of the poor,

Robin G. Mahfood

P.S. This empty lunch sack represents a hungry child's last hope for food. Please, do what you can to help bring relief to starving children.