

A story of sponsorship

St. John's Third World Apostolate would like to share with all parishioners a story about child sponsorship that we first heard about during our annual Child Sponsorship program in 2006.

A parish family has been sponsoring a 15 year old boy for the last five years. His family consists of his father and mother, two brothers and grandparents. The family and the sponsored child write each other regularly and it was through their correspondence that this family learned that the walls of the boy's home were made of coconut thatches and that his family was struggling with rain leaking in through the thatches.

The family decided to contact the Christian Foundation for Children and Aging (CFCA), the Catholic lay organization through which they sponsor the child, to learn more about the boy's home and if they could do anything to help. The CFCA project directors at the mission site confirmed the condition of the boy's home and said that this family could help their sponsored child's family directly with the home if they chose to do so. They also found out that the child's mother has been ill, that the boy's two brothers are continuing their education with the help of religious organizations in the area and that the overall annual income of the family is approximately \$625. Their mother's medical expenses and all their daily needs are paid for from this income.

The family also learned from the CFCA project directors that the house was in very poor condition—described “like a shelter in a slum.” The measurement of the plot is 30' x 10'. There were no side walls. The tiled roof was supported with 10 stone pillars measuring 6"x 6". They had put up a tile roof with old materials (tiles and rafters) given by the local convent. The tile roof required repair and the sides of the house and three partitions were made of coconut thatches. There were no proper doors and windows, the floor was made of mud using cow dung for the finish whenever necessary and the house had no electricity.

Through CFCA, the family received two estimates—one for repair of the roof with brick walls all around for at total of \$1900 and the other estimate for total improvement to the home by providing side walls with brick work in cement mortar, cement concrete flooring, two doors and two windows, repair of the roof and electricity to the home for at total of \$2750. After learning the complete condition of the home and the overall costs, the family decided to pay for the total improvement to the home and to provide them with electricity!

The CFCA projects directors assured the family that the sponsored child's family could maintain the home if it were rebuilt and that CFCA subproject coordinators would be responsible for monitoring the entire process of reconstruction.

As you can imagine, the boy and his family are so happy! Please read below excerpts from some of the child's letters, in his own words, to the sponsoring family.

“Our STM subproject coordinator shared this joyful matter with our parents. He told that it would be useful for us if we start the construction works in the summer holidays. In the summer, I and my two brothers will also be useful for the works.

Hearing this wonderful news my father, mother and brothers were much happy and joy. I can not express my mother's happiness in words. My father told that he would pray for all of you. My family thanked God for selecting me in this project. I express my heartfelt gratitude to you. You give me good opportunity to continue my studies. This time you come forward to wipe out my family's tears about the poor shelter. Thank you very much.

... Our family feels proud and astonishment for having you for us. Once again I and my family submit our very big thank you to you."

...“the subproject coordinator Fr. _____ and the brother assisting him in accounts advised our family to construct the house using the family members instead of hired labourers. We hired labourers only for the inevitable reasons. This plan helped us to control the expenses to its estimated limit. The subproject staff also visited our house during the construction works.”

“The work has not met any hurdle from the day of foundation. So, my parents are abundantly happy. They submit their joyful thanks to you....
We continue to pray for you. Thank you.”

“It is the unforgettable day [September 22, 2006] in my life to have my feet on the house repaired and renovated by my beloved sponsored parents. Again and again I say thank you for showering such a compassionate gift on me.

I continuously remember you in mass celebrations I attend every Saturday and Sunday. My father, mother brothers and grandparents would like to convey their greetings to you. Convey my regards to Thanking you.

Your loving child, _____”

We commend this family wholeheartedly for their loving concern, compassion and generosity! The impact their family has made to this child's family is immeasurable. This story highlights the fact that we really can make a difference in the lives of others far less fortunate--even when they live on other side of the world. ***Its impact will be felt for a lifetime in both families.***

Please see the photos of this child in the vestibule of the parish along with before and after photos of his newly rebuilt home!

We would love to hear more stories of sponsorship that could be shared with all parishioners. Please do not hesitate to contact Marie Buckley, and a member of the Third World Apostolate will gladly contact you!

This child has been sponsored through the CFCA, one of the four projects offered through St. John's Child sponsorship program. A child or aging adult can be sponsored anytime by contacting CFCA at 800-875-6564 or visiting their website at www.cfcausa.org. The monthly contribution of \$30 provides nutrition, clothing, medical care and education (annual sponsorship is a total of \$360).