

Compassion of Kindred Spirits

The little town of Midleton in Cork, Ireland, has a beautiful memorial consisting of a gleaming circle of nine steel feathers, each almost twenty feet tall and attesting to a remarkable union of the Irish and Choctaw people who were thousands of miles from each other. So how did this come about?

By 1847, the most catastrophic year of the Great Hunger in Ireland (1845-1850), over a million people had already died and nearly two million had been compelled to emigrate on coffin ships to the new world. Most of the wretched who remained endured all kinds of affliction from dire poverty.

At about the same time, another catastrophe had taken place four thousand miles away in the United States. The Trail of Tears was the involuntary relocation of approximately 100,000 Native Americans in the 1830's, in which thousands of indigenous people lost their lives. It's considered today as a great human rights atrocity and a shameful period in the history of the United States. The Choctaw Nation was forced to give up its lands east of the Mississippi River from what are now the states of Mississippi and Louisiana and migrate by foot for 1500 miles to an area in present day Oklahoma.

In 1847, that terrible year for Ireland, the Choctaw Nation, not having yet recovered from the Trail of Tears but hearing about the crisis in Ireland began collecting donations to send to the starving people of Ireland. Despite their poverty and devastation, they collected \$170 and sent the money to Ireland. The value could have been up to \$20,000 today. This from a ravaged people who had nothing. The Choctaw Nation's gift was recognized as extraordinary even at that time. Many Irish Americans whose ancestors came from Cork were saved because of this gift.

I'm sure that the Choctaw were not unique in their awareness of the terrible conditions in Ireland. So, the question is what drove the Choctaw to respond to this crisis of people thousands of miles away when some nearby European neighbors did relatively very little. No doubt the recent history of the Choctaw motivated them to concretely help the Irish. They had empathy for the people in crisis but went that one step further and acted out of compassion for them.

Compassion is identifying with the hardship and tribulation of ourselves with the active resolve to alleviate the hardship. It is a very active emotion and response. While it builds on the human emotions of pity, sympathy and empathy, it goes beyond to the readiness to alleviate the suffering of others. An excellent understanding of compassion is found in the Golden Rule of Confucius with which we are all familiar. "Do not let others suffer what you do not wish for yourself." The notion of compassion rests at the core of all religious, moral and spiritual and secular traditions, urging us constantly to regard all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. As the Dalai Lama says "compassion is not religious business. It is human business, it is not a luxury, it is essential for our own peace of mind, it is essential for human survival."

Compassion is not only shown in one-on-one relationships, but it is the forefront in political, economic and international relationships. To practice compassion, we must broaden our horizons and practice it in every walk of life, just as the Choctaw did. It drives us to see every human being, every community, and every race with absolute justice, equity, and respect. This is essential for a fulfilled humanity.

For the most part, we do not know the people we serve through Michael's House. But we have learned of the plight of desperate aged from across the globe who do not receive assistance from world powers or international charities. These people are voiceless. Their suffering is miserable, they are powerless, they are sick and infirm, they lack medical care and above all they are alone. These are the people to whom we reach out in compassion. It is not a burden to serve them but an honor. "In a world where poverty is a crime and where people are yearning for some crumbs of affection, they can only dance on the brim of the volcano and wait for an eruption of compassion." *Erik Pevernagie*. We are it!



'Kindred Spirits' Sculpture in Cork, Ireland

Ugandan Elderly Fed Despite COVID

Our care partner in Mawanga Village, Kampala, Uganda, has managed to continue to bring smiles to the elderly. When much of Uganda was paralyzed by COVID, permission was granted for the purchase and transport of food to our care partner center in Mawanga Village, Kampala for pick up by those who were capable. For those who could not reach the center, food was delivered by volunteers with the use of bicycles. Medical care was also provided including ophthalmology visits and treatment that would only have been a dream for them without your support.

Thanks to your donations, 15 elderly began income-generating activities with minimal start-up funds. The activities included sale of prepared food, raising of chickens, papyrus mat making, maintaining a garden, and sale of charcoal. Although most of our elderly are unable to participate because of their infirm condition, each of the 15 elderly was happy to get a chance to generate income for their upkeep.



Your Support Provides Medical Care in Honduras

Elda, left, is 65 years old. She is a psychiatric patient with a history of wandering the streets. There is no psychiatric hospital nearby, and she cannot travel alone. Michael's House provides the travel funds for Elda and a companion so that she can obtain the treatment she needs. As the result, Elda no longer wanders the streets, and her quality of life has improved.

Rosalinda, right, is 68 years old. She is a diabetic with many complications including hypertension. She struggles to survive. Often, she has had to go without her medicines because she could not afford them. Her family situation is complicated with many living at a distance and taking no responsibility for her. Thanks to your support, she is getting regular medicines and her health has stabilized.



Rosalinda



Elda

Michael's House Needs Your Volunteer Support & Leadership

So many of you have donated dollars for many years
You've fed and tended the destitute elderly
You've helped allay their fears

Your kind and loving spirit has informed our work indeed
Without you we couldn't have helped and couldn't have met
the need

In 2003 we started out - a project we would create
To help those fallen between the cracks
Moved by their dismal state

We saw their needs, and, on their faces, we saw their pain and
despair
We gave with generosity we showed them tender care

Thousands of miles we reached across because we all are one
We planned, we organized, we implemented and got the job
done

The joy that we've experienced the projects we've overseen
Has been beyond anything initially we dared to dream

We are coming up on 20 years of an incredible mission that has touched so many lives in dire need. Please help us to continue and grow this mission. If you would like more information, please contact:

Lynda Mischler
lyndamischler@gmail.com

Dennis Tarnier
dtssmd@aol.com

Anne Ackerman
ama2909@gmail.com

And as you know at Michael's House All are volunteers
And many of us here on the board have served for many
years

The time has come for some of us to take a different role
While continuing our support but passing the control

We are seeking leadership a chance to work from within
To lend your talents to this cause, with new ideas to begin

The time commitment isn't large there are many roles to
play
Could you consider helping out to guide our projects
today?

You can work from home to accomplish your task, the
commitment is up to you
We welcome any active role that you are willing to do

We meet remotely once a month Saturday 10 to noon
Please consider helping out, we hope to hear from you
soon!