

# The Value of Work

Dear Friends in Christ,

Dr. Simone sure loves his job. He loves being a doctor. He loves being able to use his God given abilities to serve Jesus, the Worker and Healer. He loves his patients and the staff at his clinic. Knowing Dr. Simone as we all do, you probably won't be surprised to hear that he has only missed 2 1/2 hours of work at his clinic in the past 48 years. That's not to say that it is always easy for him to get up early on Saturday mornings to open his clinic at 4:00 am but it sure helps when you love your work. We also know that Dr. Simone and Joan are among the largest benefactors of CFFC. They live on a very modest income. Most of the money that he earns as a doctor goes directly to CFFC and to the poor. Even though he has retired from the day to day operations of the charity, Dr. Simone's work is still very important to the life of CFFC. When Dr. Simone found out several months ago that he was suffering from poor blood circulation and was going to need heart surgery to correct his aortic valve stenosis, one of the first questions that came into his mind was "how long will I have to be off work?" His Cardiologist told him probably 6-8 weeks. Now Dr. Simone listens to his doctors. He tries to be a good patient and respects the medical advice he is given by professionals. He also tries to be obedient and to totally accept God's Will. He has often mentioned that as medical doctor he can see that God created the human body magnificently. His medical studies have helped him to appreciate that God created our bodies with a tremendous capacity to heal. Dr. Simone asked his Cardiologist if it would be alright for him to train for his surgery? [I guess, once an Iron Man athlete always an Iron Man athlete?] Dr. Simone thought that being in good shape might help speed up his healing process? His doctor gave him permission to lightly train but warned him to do nothing competitive. He was after all in need of heart surgery! Dr. Simone continued swimming and his exercises right up until the day before his surgery on Monday, November 28, 2016. Thankfully, the surgery was successful and within 24 hours, Dr. Simone was on his feet walking around the hospital. The highlight of his hospital stay was that he got to watch a NFL Thursday night football game. He watched the game for free in the TV lounge at the hospital. "I haven't seen the Dallas Cowboys play for years. I have to do this more often!" Dr. Simone was discharged on Saturday, December 2, 2016 after 5 days in the hospital. The first thing he did when he got home was get ready for Sunday Mass. He went to the 5:00 pm Saturday evening Mass at Our Lady of Sorrows Church. On Monday, December 4, 2016, Dr. Simone said he woke up and felt pretty good, good enough to open his clinic! Glory to God in the Highest! Dr. Simone said that he was very grateful for all of the prayers that he received prior to his surgery. Our prayers really made a difference. I want you to be aware of the glorious effects of our prayers and of the great Mercy of God. God's Grace allowed Dr. Simone to return to work quickly. I was told that shortly after returning to work at his clinic, Dr. Simone ordered biopsies and discovered that two of his patients had cancerous melanomas. Early diagnosis of melanoma is crucial for treatment and survival. His speedy return to work may have help to save two patients' lives? Had Dr. Simone's recovery been 6-8 weeks, as expected, these conditions would have dangerously progressed. Thank you Jesus that this wasn't the case. While Dr. Simone has never complained or said anything to me, I can't help but wonder if he sometimes feels pressure to not be sick? So many people count on him both here and around the world. Jesus sure puts him to work! As a Dermatologist, Dr. Simone often gets requests from his patients to perform cosmetic procedures. This is not a big part of his medical practice because he has so many patients who need important necessary treatment. Most cosmetic work is optional and not deemed essential. It is scheduled during Dr. Simone's spare time. When Dr. Simone performs this cosmetic work he donates 100% of his fees to a special project started by Fr. Flavian Mucci. During the three weeks before Christmas, shortly after his heart surgery, Dr. Simone was able to earn, doing these cosmetic procedures, an extra \$10,180 US to help fund a special "work" initiative in El Salvador.

One of Dr. Simone's best friends is Fr. Flavian Mucci, OFM. Fr. Flavian is a Franciscan priest who was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He was ordained to the Priesthood in 1963. He has been mentioned many times in these newsletters over the years. We have been following the lives and progression of Jennifer

and Kevin, who were brought as infants to one of Fr. Flavian's medical clinics, close to death, several years ago. In the 1960's Fr. Flavian was sent to El Salvador to work and live with the Poor. El Salvador was going through a terrible civil war when Fr. Flavian arrived. It was an extremely violent and dangerous place. You will remember the story of Blessed Oscar Romero. Priests, Nuns, even Bishop Romero himself, were brutally murdered for defending and helping the poor. In 1967 Fr. Flavian founded a charity in El Salvador, Agape. His reputation for loving and helping the poor in El Salvador has become legendary over the past fifty years. Canadian Food For Children has a long standing partnership with Fr. Flavian and Agape. We try to send a forty foot cargo container to him every week. While we always send good food there is usually room in every container to send other things. On a visit to Canada a few years ago, Fr. Flavian stopped by the CFFC warehouse for a visit. I remember John Antonacci, the Friday volunteer team leader, asking Fr. Flavian what things Agape could not use in El Salvador? It would be no use sending things to him that Agape could not use or did not want. There was not a single item that we had in the warehouse that he did not want. We tried very hard to find something that Fr. Flavian would refuse. Furniture, used electrical appliances, old doors, windows, wheelchairs, toys, old bicycles, pieces of wood and scrap metal, clothes, he wanted EVERYTHING for the poor. I spoke to Dr. Simone about Fr. Flavian's visit and how he saw such value in everything. Dr. Simone explained to me that all of these extra things that we send to Fr. Flavian in our containers are used to put people to work. To give people small jobs. He said one of the greatest tragedies in the world today is the lack of work. There is tremendous value and dignity in work. You will recall that Jesus as a young boy learned the skills and the trade of Carpentry. St. Joseph put Jesus to work as a young boy. All of the Apostles had jobs, many worked as fishermen. Even St. Paul was a tent maker. There is a spiritual and mental poverty that is brought about when healthy people cannot find work and support their families and themselves. Dr. Simone said that it is a tragedy to see the thousands of men who are unemployed in the developing world. With no jobs or work available, they often sit around all day drinking or taking drugs while their wives take care of the children and the household. Without jobs and money to support their children many women feel that they have no option but to sell their bodies to buy food. Fr. Flavian quickly identified the spiritual poverty of unemployment in his community in El Salvador. Agape now employs several hundred people to fix, repair and build things. In all, Fr. Flavian and Agape have started 54 programs in the areas of religion, education, a home for the dying elderly, a university for students from poor families, a medical hospital, a restaurant, a hotel, a publishing house and a TV station to name a few. Through our work at CFFC and through Dr. Simone's work as a doctor we are able to support the work of Fr. Flavian and provide some meaningful work for our sisters and brothers in El Salvador and around the world. Through his cosmetic work, Dr. Simone can send a little extra money to Fr. Flavian that he can use to pay wages, create more jobs and provide some dignity in people's lives. Thank you Jesus for helping Dr. Simone get back to work quickly! Thank you Jesus for the work of Fr. Flavian Mucci and Agape! Thank you Jesus for all of the hard work of our benefactors and volunteers!

I asked Dr. Simone to share an Easter memory from when he was a young boy. He smiled and told me about an old tradition in his family. His father, Roy Simone, used to buy a chocolate Easter egg for Andrew and for each of Andrew's five sisters every Easter. Money was always in short supply but Roy always came through. Dr. Simone still remembers the name of the chocolate store, Savonia Sweets in Toronto, so the chocolate must have been delicious. Roy would have Savonia Sweets write the name of each of his children on a separate egg. There would be no fighting, everyone would get their own personalized chocolate Easter egg. Andrew and four of his sisters always noticed that his one sister, Antoinette, would always get a larger egg than everyone else. Did Roy like her best?? No, she got a larger Easter egg because her name was so long! Savonia Sweets had to use a larger chocolate egg in order to be able to spell her full name on it! Oh the sweet, sweet joy of having a long Christian name!! Happy Easter and May God bring to completion the good work that He has started in you all.

**Brian Finamore**  
Chaplain, CFFC