

Pastor's Corner - October 9, 2011 - Nelly Furtado

I found this reflection on the editorial page of the Globe and Mail (Sept. 28) and thought this quite appropriate on this Thanksgiving weekend. Here is a local young woman/mother who has become famous worldwide because of her songs and who very simply has grown as a person and as a Christian because of a direct experience with the poor in Africa. She came to help the **Free the Children** organization founded by the Catholic Krielburger brothers who as young teenagers years ago wished to put their faith into practice. Highlights are mine in this abbreviated version. Shalom. Fr. Rolf, OP

“Finding my map within Africa’s greater one (title). Last January I was invited to Africa. Somehow, I knew it was time to come home. While the people, the places left such strong impressions, the hope I left Africa with was more profound than anything else. I learned so much about community, spirituality and, of course, song and dance, African rhythms, and the sustainable work **Free the Children** does in true partnership with communities in Kenya and worldwide – Sierra Leone, India, Ecuador, China to name a few. ... A month after I returned from Kenya, as the Libyan civil war was heated up, I found myself, BlackBerry in hand at 3 am unable to sleep: in Libya, people who rightly believed the cost of freedom was worth it because the benefits were tenfold, were being killed; people were living things I couldn’t truly fathom, but I could feel the weight of them inside my heart. In an act of solidarity, I sent a tweet about my intentions to return money I felt wasn’t truly mine. I decided to give the \$1 million (what I was paid to cover expenses for the 2007 Italian concert in front of an “oil sheik” and a “son of Gadhafi”) to **Free the Children**, but I wanted a plan that would include the people of Libya. I decided on a sustainable program, rather than immediate aid, inspired by the work I had seen in action with Free the Children. I wanted to support women’s rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)... I wanted to help educate girls so they might have a place in the new democratic regimes.... I also wanted to build another school in Kenya like the Kisaruni school where I spent life-changing days a school that would support brave girls like the ones I had met, girls so confident they put my 14 year-old self to shame. **I wanted and needed to help youth across North America; I’ve set up a matching program through Free the Children to inspire youth to do more fundraising and believe in the “power of we.”...Now I understand that the feeling in the pit of my stomach was just the toll of that amazing bell we all have within that signifies a new journey in life. Then, the sound was faint. Today, it rings louder than ever in my heart. It’s so ironic that I went to Kenya intending “to help” and left as the one who received the most charity.** The world is, always will be complicated. Moral dilemmas will continue to be present in my career, which attempts to merge corporate and emotional needs on a daily basis. The world is changing faster than we can handle. Money rules. **Yet, in that rural town in Kenya near Kisaruni High School, God rules. I now laugh at the phrase “Third World,” because the “Third World” is so full of human triumph. In many ways, it is the heart of the spiritual world. A name like “the third eye world” would be more appropriate. It is the world that contains the people who will save us with their proximity to God, primordial relevance and belief in the human senses and sensitivities – the very things that make us vital as humans and will ensure our survival. We just need to wake up and start joining forces. The student of life within me has been summoned and humbled. When roll call is read, I will forever be present with a recent map in hand – a map that I hope, one day, will be void of the borders that separate us.”**

Shalom,

Fr. Rolf, OP