

The Soul of the Church

“**H**ow long, O God?” cried the psalmist. How long will we see the sad, deeply-socketed eyes of children in our world? Every day children face death, homelessness, starvation, abuse, disease, war, and poverty. Their longing cries reflect the anguish of the psalmist: “My tears have been my food day and night” (Psalm 42:3). At times they are too weak to weep.

This issue of *Circuit Rider* seeks to share the rich experiences of those in our churches who are reaching out to children.

The Bishops’ Initiative on Children and Poverty acknowledges the distressing conditions that many children face and seeks to sensitize the corporate soul of the church to their needs and the needs of the poor. “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?” (Psalm 42:5). As long as any child of God is living in these tragic circumstances, the church’s soul cannot be at rest.

September 11 can be a turning point for us. Now many children and families in the church and the community, who thought that life was predictably stable and reasonably happy, may sense a new urgency to move from sentiment to acts of justice and compassion.

Immediately following the cry of disquietude by the psalmist is the exclamation, “Hope in God!” The good news is that God’s people in many of our churches are holding, lifting, embracing, feeding, clothing, inoculating, teaching, and singing with children and the poor. Here are some stories to stir our own creativities and passions.

In our society the image of God so beautifully seen in a child is being attacked. Perhaps, as our Lord said and enacted in the Garden of Gethsemane, we do not need legions of angels for battle, but rather the loving sacrificial walk with and on behalf of the children and the poor in our world.

**The
image of
God so
beautifully
seen in
a child
is being
attacked.**

Bishop George W. Bashore
Guest Editor