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LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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Dear Friends,

We are all still suffering from the shock of what happened on 11 September and the resulting consequences. It is not my intention to analyse, condemn or discuss these events. I simply wish to share with you a circular I discovered on the internet and which is attributed to the Dalai-Lama. I was impressed by its humanity and good sense. If only the world could listen to and put into practice this message things might be resolved as if by magic without violence and without war. Utopia? Perhaps not...judge for yourselves.

The following summarises news of our activities.

News from Sudan

All our programmes are running satisfactorily and the funding for this year has all been found thanks not only to you, our faithful, long-standing friends but also to other non-governmental organisations such as *Pro Victimis* whose goodwill with regard to our needs is matched only by their generosity. Thanks to them and to certain other donors we have been able to carry out:

- the renovation of our farms some of which were becoming the worse for wear;
- the repair of the well pump which allows drinking water to be supplied to the Omdurman refugee camp and also the purchase of two second-hand water carrying vehicles to replace the two that had reached the end of a long life of service to this camp;
- the replacement of two vans used for a variety of purposes including transport for the children from our homes;
- the purchase of school materials for the small children in our *rakubas* (around 50,000) thanks to one of our generous donors who prefers to remain anonymous;
- the purchase of machinery and materials to strengthen our professional training programme;
- the granting of scholarships to allow a few of the outstanding school-leavers from our homes and farms to pursue a university education.

I should remind you the some sixty students have already enrolled in a university or other place of higher education. A further group of sixty candidates are waiting to see whether a donor may come

forward to finance their studies for an average of three years. This costs around SFr. 2000 a year or SFr. 6000 in total.

Thanks to the Geneva government, which has agreed to provide SFr. 60,000 over two years for the purchase of medical supplies, we have been able to despatch more than two and a half tons of such material to ensure the proper functioning of our medical programme.

As you can see your Committee has not been idle in its fund-raising efforts. **Nevertheless there is a large deficit to be made up in the forthcoming three years if we are to be able to continue financing the Education Programme in our 90 Rakubas.** Caritas Germany (Misereor), which has, in the past, contributed the bulk of the funding for this programme, has informed us that it will be forced to reduce its contribution by more than 60 per cent! Normally this news would force the Archbishop of Khartoum to close the schools within a very short period of time since large sums of money are involved. However, Mgr. Gabriel Zubeir Wako, the archbishop of Khartoum, and those responsible for this programme which has been operating for more than fifteen years, continue to believe the programme can be saved. Sister Emmanuelle, showing that at over 90 years of age her fighting spirit is undiminished, and Kamal, her loyal and energetic director on the spot, are attempting the impossible to rescue this "Save the Saveable" programme. Your Committee and myself have had to pull out all the stops since June to try to raise the shortfall of funds. These efforts have started to bear fruit and Kamal has assured me that the money to finance the current school year has almost all been found. (We will probably have to dig deep into our reserves for the balance.) Will we be able to find the missing half a million dollars for the following year? We are not yet sure...but the history of our Association is a long series of miraculous rescues. We will continue to believe!

News from Haïti

Your President has been unable to contact Jean-Claude François by telephone for over a month. The last time we spoke he indicated that good progress was being made in the construction of health centres on the Hinche plain with the funds received from several Geneva communes which had examined the work being carried out in Haïti and wanted to show and provide tangible support. We join Jean-Claude in thanking these generous communes. They can count on their funds being spent wisely with our colleague and his wife on the spot to supervise this medical programme. The Management Institute continues to work well. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for the Mutual Loan Co-operative which is causing us concern. As the economic situation in the region and in the country as a whole worsens, more and more people are failing to reimburse their loans. Haïti is a country on the edge of bankruptcy and we can only hope that the international community will get together to provide some lasting assistance to a new government more representative and less corrupt than the previous one.

In closing I would like to say this. Occasionally we feel driven to despair. The terrible events we witness each day, the self-centred and often short-sighted policies of the major powers having to fight against frightful crimes and the threat of other problems of a similar nature, point to doom on the horizon.

And how useful are our puny efforts to help that section of humanity which, feeling more and more rejected and despised, can resort only to violence to give purpose to their lives? It is here that the message of Christ, based on love for one's neighbour, and echoed in the attached text should comfort us. Good can come out of evil and I will close with a sentence attributed to J.J. Bernard on entering the Drancy concentration camp after being in hiding a long time:

“Up until now we were living in fear; now we are going to live in hope”

Michel Bittar
President