

Missions in Brazil

Al Gerwing's Work with the Poor and Homeless in Brazil

Since his first trip to Brazil in 1979, Alphonse has made the betterment of the poor and homeless in Brazil a personal mission. Common cane field workers are kept in a state of virtual slavery by the large estate cane plantations. Never do they own the hut they live in, never are they allowed to buy anywhere but at the company store with the dollar a day they are paid. Children start working in the cane fields at the same age they start school in Canada. When plantation owners decide to switch to cattle ranching, thousands of families are thrown off the plantation. Many gravitate to the large centres, with hopes of finding a job and making a living. Almost all find life in the streets, begging and scrounging for food. Children are sometimes orphaned or abandoned, living in packs on the streets of the cities. They fend for themselves, digging in dumps, begging in the markets, and at times stealing in order to survive. Many fall victim to drugs, prostitution, starvation, and murder. Even the police are known to kill off street children, seen by the ruling class as vermin.

Working with missions such as the *Rainbow of Hope for Children*, Al has been able to help raise funds to sponsor projects to bring hope for many of the poor of Brazil. Al works with local volunteers and missionaries to help fund projects that were initiated by the local people themselves. Organizations such as Fundanor, The Movement of the Roofless, and the Free Land Holders have benefited through sponsorship from *Rainbow of Hope*, the *Alphonse Gerwing Foundation* (a sponsoring organization implemented by Al's nieces and nephews), and at times from Al's own pocket! This partnering approach helps the Brazilians gain more than food and shelter. The people gain a sense of pride and accomplishment by making a contribution to the betterment for themselves and others around them.

This CDROM was developed to help bring awareness to Al's work in Brazil. Many times we make donations with very little awareness of where our contributions end up. We hope that by touring through these stories, you will feel comforted knowing where your contribution is going.

