

The ultimate gift

Christmas is a time for giving so let's give help to those who need it most.



The answer to human misery is human compassion. A donation of \$10 can educate, vaccinate, even save a life. *Photo: AP*

Our world is not beautiful and life is not wonderful.

I am as guilty as anyone of focusing on the positive. But I defend this habit as excusable optimism, for I do know better. Yes, there is great beauty to be found and

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the lives of many people are wonderful indeed. But obviously there is far too much suffering out there to honestly describe our world as beautiful. And the misery of the poor leaves life in general somewhere short of wonderful.

When I hear or speak of humankind's brilliance, I quietly cringe in silent acknowledgement of the fact that my species allows 10 million of its children to die painfully each year from hunger and treatable diseases. We are not great and we do not live in great times, not when so many children die each day because they were born to poor parents. It's not my fault, we say. But it's not their fault either.

When confronted with the harsh reality of poverty in our time, good people are almost always moved to act. Well, I am politely confronting you here and now in the hope that you will act.

Yes, global poverty is complex. Much of Africa, for example, is a continual train wreck because of an intimidating mix of factors including environmental challenges,

lingering damage from the slave trade and colonialism, educational deficiencies, incompetent governments, corrupt leaders, etc. Why bother throwing money at such a hopeless mess, you ask? The answer is because thousands of children are scheduled to die needlessly every day next year. That is reason enough to throw money in their direction. The alternative—turning our backs on children—is not acceptable within any respectable moral framework. Yes, there are problems with aid in Africa and in other places but that does not excuse us from trying to help. Who cares if some scumbag

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dictator skims off the top? Attempting to get \$10 to one of those children is worth the gamble. We have to try.

Wait, you say, charity begins at home and for our people. I agree; but don't you agree that our home is the Earth and all people are our people? We can care for everyone in the Cayman Islands and still have a few pennies left over for those who die for lack of pennies. The time for containing one's compassion within the strange cage of national borders is long past. What matters more than a two-year old who needs a \$3 vaccine to live? Do her address, skin color

and the religion of her parents make her disposable in our eyes?

Christmas is a time for love. Who better to target than the world's poorest children for a bit of Christmas love? Thanks to our wildly imbalanced world, what is to us a relatively small amount of money can represent a life-saving miracle for others. A small act of kindness today can leave you with the knowledge that you did something to answer all those cries from just over the horizon.

I am asking you to give a Christmas gift of \$10 to Cayman Loves Children. This group, of which I am a member, collects donations and regularly forwards the money to UNICEF in the name of the people of the Cayman Islands. We send every penny collected. Nothing is taken out for expenses. Parents might consider encouraging their children to make a donation. It can be a great learning experience and broaden their view of the world.

Please don't put this off. If you do, you are likely to forget. Do it right now. Donations may be mailed to: Cayman Loves Children, Box 30383 SMB, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands.

If you prefer to give directly to UNICEF, please do so. Their website is www.unicef.org and they accept online credit card donations. To learn more about Cayman Loves Children, visit www.caymanloveschildren.8k.com

Merry Christmas.