



Siloam's Ministry of Giving (2 Corinthians 8:6)

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The contents of a food parcel which was distributed last May after the 'Covid-19' pandemic made it impossible for them to be distributed before Christmas. You will notice that there is no 'bacalhau' codfish Christmas delicacy as it was not seasonally relevant. Other groceries made up for that omission.

*A letter of thanks from the Senior Pastor Jorge Jacinto of the Igreja Filadélfia situated in north Lisbon. His letter explains that the 150 parcels of groceries were distributed to the poor families where the church has influence for which the locations are listed on the fourth paragraph. **

Dear faithful Siloam friends and investors

Although we have heard a little from our news media concerning Portugal during most of the 'Coronavirus' pandemic, recent reports confirm that there are actually less infections in Portugal now than there are sadly here in the UK.

But, around 400,000 people in Portugal have fallen below the poverty line defined as being 60% of the equivalent average income stated as €9,100. Indeed, before the 'Covid-19' crisis, the average income was only €10,100 per year which is one of the lowest in the EU.

Also, the 'Covid-19' crisis had a disproportionate effect on the lower to middle income groups who were the most affected by this crisis. According to a recent study, most of the people affected by 'Covid-19' were already in the lower half of the income distribution group which caused inequality to increase. In fact, the pandemic led to a staggering 25% increase in poverty over just one year which jeopardised the progress made over the last 20 years, which was slowly reversing the trend of continued poverty. Since 2015, the poverty rate was still high by most standards though being 19% of the average income. ➡

We are indebted also to Elisa, Pastor Oscar's wife (right) who has helped on many occasions to put these Christmas food parcels together as a practical expression of Christian love.



Tourism is one of the important sources of income for Portugal's economy and this was devastated during 'Covid-19' periods of 'lockdown.' The restrictions made by the strict Portuguese government did however save people from the more detrimental health effects of 'Covid-19' but this in fact devastated Portugal's fragile economy. Most people who were in the hospitality trade lost their jobs as all the restaurants, hotels and bars closed. There were very strict travel restrictions for people travelling from home to work and you could only travel if you had a travel permit! Those that did not have permits were fined and people were penalised if they did not obey the government's ruling. People in Portugal are far more compliant with government regulations than they are here in the UK because many remembered the period of dictatorship where many freedoms did not exist. Unlike here in the UK, people did not tend to argue or challenge the authorities' instructions to isolate or wear masks. Remember the English football supporters in North Portugal!!



The result of 'Covid-19' pandemic meant that many young couples who had mortgages were **forced to sell their houses** and try to rent small

apartments. Many others were made homeless as they were unable to pay the rents which are now increasing. Many people were made even poorer because of loss of employment and in some cases the death of the 'breadwinner.'

Siloam's Christmas parcel outreach planned for Portugal last Christmas was actually delayed because of the travel restrictions which would have made an earlier distribution impossible. But, 150 food parcels were actually distributed in May 2021 to poor families living near the Igreja Filadélfia

through whom Pastor Oscar Segura organised our food parcel distribution.

The food parcels were indeed a 'life saver' to 150 families who would not have had this provision had not our Siloam supporters made that distribution possible.

This year we are hoping that our Christmas parcel outreach will take place shortly before Christmas so that we can use the opportunity to celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ which will have a double benefit upon the grateful recipients. If we can explain the simple message of the gospel while at the same time providing a tangible expression of Christian love during the nativity season, we know that this will touch hearts and make people consider their eternal destiny. Please look at the photos and enjoy the smiling faces behind the masks of the grateful recipients who would otherwise not have enjoyed this token of our supporters' generosity, had we not been able to help them.

This Christmas we are planning to distribute another 150 food parcels to poor people in Portugal for which we require a total of £3,000. Each food parcel will cost roughly £18 plus transport costs so if you would like to invest with us again this winter, we will be sure to make Christmas happier and more enjoyable for at least 150 poor Portuguese families.

Please look again at the photos and see how our/your help was so much appreciated.

Your gift of £5, £10, £20, £50 or £100 when accumulated together with others, will make our budget target possible. Please invest what you can as an offering to the Lord Jesus knowing that it will be wisely used by Pastor Oscar Segura to provide a practical token of your Christian love.

Yours sincerely on behalf of those we seek to win for Christ in Portugal and elsewhere

Richard Norton
Director-Siloam UK



P.S. Please also pray that there will be no further 'lockdowns' in Portugal and that the fragile economy will recover so that people can rebuild their hopes and dreams – thank you.

Pastor Oscar (far left) with his face obscured with a 'Covid-19' protection mask, organised the annual parcel distribution even if this year it was rather out of season.

Clear plastic bags were used to show the contents of the parcel so that everyone could see they were getting roughly the same contents and that nothing untoward was hidden.



Just simple groceries value £18.00 to keep body and soul together. No Christmas turkeys or plum puddings here but good wholesome food given as an expression of Christian love to desperate families.



Without the help of church volunteers to make up these food parcels, the task would have been impossible. We are grateful for those who shared with Pastor Oscar their time and effort in putting together this food distribution around Eastertime this year.

Siloam is grateful for use of a nearby warehouse where the parcels could be made up and ready for distribution which brought such happiness to so many desperate people.

Pastor Oscar's wife Elisa together with other volunteers helped put together 150 parcels of groceries for prayerful distribution.



Groceries were purchased at the best possible prices from sympathetic supermarkets who gave us good wholesale prices.

Out of all the E.U countries, Portugal was perhaps one of the worst affected by the 'Covid-19' pandemic. Many folk had to rely on food banks in order to put a meal on the table. Our extra outreach which was delayed from Christmas 2020 was indeed very welcome for desperate families living in the Bairros where the poor people live.



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More pictures overleaf





Christmas parcel outreach to Guinea-Bissau

As you will have read in my front-page report, there are many families who suffered this year because of the 'Covid-19' pandemic. The poor got even poorer and many folk had to give up their homes because they could not pay their mortgage or the rent.



In addition to this Christmas parcel outreach which we hope will go ahead 'Covid-19' restrictions allowing, in which this Christmas we plan to include the Portuguese delicacy of salted codfish 'bacalhau' which is very important for Portuguese people as they celebrate with a meal on Christmas Eve; we are also reaching out to Guinea-Bissau in Africa.

In November, Siloam forwarded €1,000 to Pastor Oscar Segura to help him pay for a Christmas food parcel outreach to his missionary friends in Guinea-Bissau, a desperately poor former colony of Portugal where Pastor Oscar Segura served his military national service as a young man. Pastor Oscar Segura was very motivated to explain the life-changing gospel message of Jesus Christ so he was responsible for setting up a small missionary church which he still occasionally visits to encourage as funds permit.

Although he has not visited Guinea-Bissau for sometime because of the 'Covid-19' restrictions, the gift of food parcels which will be distributed by his African co-workers whom we know will be very grateful. These funds have been taken from Siloam's reserves to meet this important timely need as an extension of our Christian love."



Ave Norton holding 'bacalhau', the Portuguese delicacy of salted codfish.

Although we cannot see the smiles on the faces of the people who received the food parcels because of the masks, we do know that many were blessed spiritually as well as materially and we trust that their hearts were softened and made more fertile for the gospel message.

Please try to send your donation by December 20th - Thank you

Please make all your donations payable to: Siloam Christian Ministries

member of **evangelical alliance** together making Jesus known

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