

February 27, 2009  
Maceió, Alagoas - Brazil

My Dear Friend Thomas (Al Gerwing)

Tomorrow you would be 86 years old, I thought about writing this letter for you tomorrow, but as I know that your party in Heavens starts today, I decided to do my celebration today as well.

I know that tomorrow the Heavens will have party, I even can foresee how it will be: an Angel choir singing at dawn; your soul will be totally illuminated as it always has been; you'll be seated on the right side of God, the same God of justice and solidarity that always guided you while you lived on earth; Maria, Jesus mother and our mother is in front of you, lighting your way and scenting your life in heaven.

Tomorrow you officially will be made saint because here on earth you lived the sanctity of those who did good, and God will show you the list of goodness you did in your lifetime. Be prepared for the reading of this list because it is long and infinite, because God will remember of each of your good gestures.

I even can imagine who will be the guests for your party over there in heaven, see what a beautiful list it is: Your Mom, your Dad, your Grandparents, all your relatives, Martin Luther King, Madre Theresa de Calcutta, Che Guevara, Mahatma Gandhi, Zumbi dos Palmares, Dandara (Zumbi's wife), Margarida Alves, Chico Mendes, Frey Tito, Dom Helder Camara, Anastacia, my beloved friend feminist Jareda Viana, my beloved feminist friends and rural workers: Nazare Flor, Maria das Graças, Audaléia and Solange, Father Josimo, Sister Dorothy, Paulo Freire, and many others that practiced the goodness of their hearts and are now in heaven.

My dear friend, I miss you, mainly when I open my mailbox, because only you sent me personal letters. Also when it is rainy, because you always phoned to ask about those people leaving on the hills, and when it is drought, I think of your calls to ask of the news from the Sertão.

See, all this demonstrates the person you were here on earth and that you still are in heaven.

All your life was based on loving others, as Jesus Christ, you practiced only love. I will never forget the love you had, and I am sure still have for my people of Alagoas, as you know my people continue struggling not as intense but still struggling.

Yesterday I came back from a trip to Piaçabuçu, the municipality close to Penedo, with two people from the Action Aid NGO, where we stayed in a rural community called Retiro. These two youth wanted to know 3 life stories: one from a girl, another from a mother that overcame great difficulties, and another from a mother now in difficulty.

When they interviewed the mother still in difficulty, I cried a lot because this mother needs to beg to raise her 3 kids (a daughter only 7 months old) and an ill husband. This woman is only 30 years, but looks very old. And what is most touching is that this woman has a great love for her family, and despite the state of poverty she did not turn them down.

The idea of working with children and youth reinvigorates our strength, because we understand that these groups require more attention from us.

I am sure you are happy with this new mission we started. And all this we owe you for being the first person to believe in our capacity, you were the first one to extend a hand, so I am sure that you know how much we love you. We will never forget that it was through you that we met George and Louise Bunz, Hank Zyp, Susan and Cliff Nosbush, Marivone and Douglas Lier, Joana and Robert Rajotte, Maurice Rajotte, Leo Page, and many other people from The Alphonso Gerwing Foundation, The Rainbow of Hope for Children, CIDA, Wild Rose Foundation, The Change for Children, from Saint Joseph Save the Children, and many other organizations, for which we are grateful.

We thank God for bringing you and other Canadian friends to our path.

Happy Birthday my dear and eternal friend, may the light of God keep shining and lighting your path, and that this path be of eternal peace.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!!!**

**YOU ARE THE STAR THAT GUIDES OUR LIVES!**

A kiss from Maria Jose da Silva, Zezé, and all the women that make up the Movement of Rural and Fisher Women Workers of Alagoas