

Malawi's Sister Chipeta wins US \$1 million Opus award

By NYASA TIMES

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Malawian unsung hero Sister Beatrice Chipeta, the founder of Lusubilo Orphan Care in Karonga, northern Malawi has been honored at Fordham Jesuit University in United States of America as co-recipients of the million-dollar Opus Prize, an annual faith-based humanitarian award that celebrates unsung heroes.

One of the largest humanitarian awards, the Opus Prize is designed to provide a single significant infusion of resources to advance humanitarians' work—and bring greater visibility to causes that have gone untold.



Sister Chipeta receives greetings from Joseph Rauenhorst of the Opus Foundation and members of the Fordham community. Photos by Jon Roemer

Sister Chipeta shared the US\$1.1 million award with Fr. John Halligan who works in Quito, Ecuador.

This year marks the first time in the Opus Prize Foundation's seven-year history that the award is being split evenly between two recipients, said Don Neureuther, spokesperson for the foundation.

"Sister Chipeta and Father Halligan embody every aspect of the Opus Prize selection criteria," said Neireuther on the Fordham Jesuit University of New York website.

"We're delighted to honor these two faith-based social entrepreneurs who have dedicated their lives to addressing some of the great social issues of our day."

According the University, Sister Chipeta known as the "Mother Teresa" of Malawi, began ministering to orphaned children in the 1990s in poor and AIDS-stricken areas with the mission of empowering every child and adult.

Her organization in Karonga supports child care centers in 64 villages, a network of food centers that serve more than 4,000 children every week, youth programs, a bursar program

to help with school fees, agricultural and vocational training, HIV/AIDS support groups and a rehabilitation center.

Lusubilo (hope) also supports 75 orphan-headed households by providing food and counseling services. It sponsors a residential care facility for 250 displaced children.

Fordham University website reported that Sister Chipeta who is Catholic Relief Services' partner, bowed to the audience upon receiving the award.

"There are so many things coming into my mind, but mostly it is joy," she said, according to Fordham University website. "This gift makes us have hope of continuing our aid."

She urged students to "listen to your inner inspiration, and take some action" to help others.

"It comes from God," she said, "and God never fails you."



"The children are happy because there has been a change from the way things were to the way things are now," she reportedly told the crowd. "God has used me to meet the needs of so many people he cares. He is using the powerless to carry out his will."

According to Opus Prize website, Chipeta was raised as a Presbyterian but became enamored at an early age with Catholic nuns who were ministering in Malawi.

As a young woman, she converted to Catholicism, joining the Rosarian Sisters who live and work exclusively in the diocese of Mzuzu. She spent much of her career as a teacher, and when she retired from the classroom, Sister Chipeta focused her energies on her charity organisation.—(*Reporting by Thom Chiumia, Nyasa Times*)