



## **“Papa” Martin, hero of orphans.**

A business-man, down-hearted and despairing, reached out to orphans with great needs, and it changed his life.

Martin Oosthuizen had often said that when his business was doing well, he would find a worthy cause and support it; when he had plenty of money he would reach out to others.

But fate took a different turn.

He was living in the leafy suburb of Tokai in Cape Town; he ran a successful travel business and was the owner of 15 flats. Suddenly the recession struck and all changed. He was floundering in a financial morass. There seemed no way out of it, and the thought of taking his own life crossed his mind.

In that hour of darkness a wonderful thing happened that made him aware that there was a much greater richness in life than toiling for money. A friend, Ulindi Wolhuter, mentioned that she had given a lift to a young girl who had to walk 15 kilometres to school; it was raining heavily and the girl was soaked, even to her shoes. She told Ulindi that her parents had died, and that she was cared for by her elder sister, she had scarcely enough money for her food and school clothes, and that transport to and from the school was out of the question. She lived in Westlake a few kilometres from Tokai.

Martin was deeply troubled by the thought that there were people on his doorstep enduring such hardship. He and his wife, Louise, prayed about it, and the next day the answer came: Riana Beretta, a friend of Ulindi phoned to say their trust was seeking an orphan whom they could help. Martin and Ulindi set off to the school.

The principal told them that there were many children in need. One such was Bafana Nkatazo who came pleading to be accepted, even though he had no school clothes. Both his parents were dead and he was cared for by his sister who could not afford them. His sheer persistence caused the school to persuade Pick n Pay to provide them. The boy persevered against all odds. This touched Martin so that he wanted to meet him.

There are an estimated 1.5 million Aids orphans in South Africa. At Westlake with a population of 6000, there are more than 60 needy children, many of them orphans. An awareness of their plight stirred Martin to act, and within a few months, with the aid of friends and wider support the Orphan Care Foundation was born. It provided school fees, clothes, food, transport and

dental care for eight children. But this number has now swelled to 60, all starting with one girl walking in the rain.

In a coffee shop, away from the cold and wet, Bafana tells how he fared: during the first term he had failed all six subjects; now he only finds two of them difficult. He wants to finish school and study at a Cape Town college to become a TV cameraman. Thanks to the Orphan Care Foundation, his dream can become a reality. He has no mother: she died when he was ten, and having never known a father, he now finds that he has one in Martin. He is excited about his future prospects.

Masixole Kondile (32) uses his bakkie to take children to and from school. He is always punctual, and says that doing this has made his life meaningful. The recession had caused him to lose his job, but seeing Martin's renewed success gives him hope to find one again.

Martin had never before been involved with welfare work, though his parents had always helped those in need. He met his wife while studying at the University of Pretoria. They have now been married for eighteen years and have two children: Enya (8) and Nicolas (6).

Martin joined his father-in-law's travel agency, and together they made a success story of it. He used the internet to draw overseas visitors, and the response was excellent. Money rolled in and he could send his children to the best private schools. He also invested in 15 properties. Then the recession shattered his dreams and brought financial woes. But through prayer and persistence and the support of family and friends the Orphan Care Foundation came into being, and the picture brightened. He stopped worrying about his misfortune and as the way became clear, his business picked up. He arranges anything, from luxury safaris to flights on war planes. While he sleeps, 200 to 300 visits are made to his website.

Martin has taught himself to paint. He says pictures are clear and bright when one grasps chances, but there is sometimes black paint on the brush. Yet without shadows, pictures would lack depth.

He has written a book about what he has learnt from life. Its title, "More than a million canaries, Triumph over financial ruin" is inspired by Luke 12: v 6-7.

A fire of hope has been lit in him and he wants to share it with others. His dream is to spread his message country-wide through seminars.

Those who wish to get in touch with him can visit his website

[www.MartinOosthuizen.com](http://www.MartinOosthuizen.com)