



HAITI MISSION TRIP:

On February 8-15 Deacon Tim Murphy, Shirley Molitor, Jim White and Maureen White visited our sister parish in Haiti. Our goodwill mission was to meet and form lasting relationships with the members of Our Lady of Lourdes congregation in Laborde, and also take part in the parish's feast day celebration. The following are excerpts from the blog found on our parish website plus one final entry.

About all my packing is done. Just got some tooth brushes and medical thermometers to squeeze in. Beyond our personal items our group is taking four 13 gallon tubs full of sheets, towels, and assorted items. I've been reading journals of my past trips to prepare myself mentally: just a 2 hour flight from the USA, a different reality, a hot tropical climate with insect born disease so take pants & long sleeves, beautiful coasts punctuated with streams choked with garbage, cell phone towers rise above mud huts with starving people. They are the reason we are going. I look forward to seeing my friend Fr. Herve and others I've met there – like children that have grown up since my trips in 2003 & 2009.

It's great not to be going by myself this time. I appreciate the faith and trust involved in an initial trip to Haiti. Much of the sense of security we take for granted here doesn't exist there. Like children we put ourselves into the hands of our Lord which is really true of all the faithful, it's just more obvious in Haiti. I thank God for the prayers offered for our trip and for Fr. Herve and others that will take good care of us. —Deacon Tim

Bonne Fete!

Saturday morning broke early as raindrops fell pleasantly across the parish grounds. "The first rain of the year, said Fr. Herve. It's a blessing from Our Lady!"

The church bell pealed the call to the Solemn Mass for Notre Dame Our Lady of Lourdes. The skies had cleared as the parishioners, dressed in their finest and most festive clothing, made their way to the Mass of Celebration. Over 700 loyal churchgoers swayed to the calypso beats in praise of Our Lady of Lourdes. Trumpets, guitars and bongos combined to create a festive spirit appropriate for the celebration at hand. Deacon Tim spoke with eloquence of the fellowship between St. Lawrence and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes. Fellow preachers spoke and the service concluded at the end of over three hours.

The concelebrants of the Mass, as well as those involved made way to the parish rectory for a banquet feast of Caribbean delicacies. Using the French word "convivialite", Fr. Herve greeted all with the phrase "Bonne Fete!" which proclaimed the "good festival" of Our Lady. —Jim

Festival Time

On Friday night, we began our celebration with an evening vigil. The event began at the parish nursing home here in Laborde, which is right down the rocky main street from the church. The congregation appears to be happy that we are joining in the celebration, but also very intrigued by our group. When we arrived at the meeting place, groups had already begun to congregate. When we came in to sight, I felt as though there were hundreds of eyes staring straight at me. Some of the people embrace us with handshakes, hugs or kisses. But there were also many that are very timid in addressing us. It has been interesting to communicate with the Our Lady of Lourdes community from both sides, but overall I feel very welcome here in Laborde.

From our meeting place we processed through town to the church. I would estimate it was about a 15 minute walk, timed perfectly with the setting sun. By the time we arrived at the church steps, our entire group had ignited our candles and concluded the chanting. We filled the church and went on with the service. Over twenty priests were in attendance to concelebrate the Mass. The participation of all was truly inspiring.



(Left to right: Deacon Tim, Maureen, Fr. Herve, Mr. Octuvre, Fr. Al, Jim, Shirley)

After church, we retreated to the rectory where we were invited to join the priests and others for a feast of goat stew and cold Prestige (Haitian beer). What a party! Also, what made the stew particularly poignant was that the goat himself was part of our welcoming party just four short days ago. Talk about a host that is willing to give it all! —Maureen

Sisters of Charity

When Fr. Herve suggested a day trip to nearby city of Les Cayes, my initial thought was that a visit to the infirmary and orphanage of the Sisters of Charity (founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta) was a definite must. Having visited before, I felt very touched, and was hoping to share the experience with our group.

Upon arrival at the compound, we were met by the jovial Sister Superior. Even though we came unannounced, she was warm and very willing to show us around the grounds. We spent about 45 minutes walking from department to department. Orphaned children from the 2012 earthquake and babies that are commonly dropped off at their front gate – some are handicapped - the poorest of the poor. One image that sticks in my mind is one worker feeding nearly twelve babies less than a year old, all on the floor waiting eagerly for the spoon to reach their mouths. The work and compassion of these Sisters is absolutely amazing. Through her tour and narrative, it was definitely apparent that this truly is a place where miracles happen. —Deacon Tim

Heartache and Joy

Thursday, Friday and Saturday were days of heartache and joy. Fr. Herve took us to Mother Teresa's orphanage and care center ran by the Sisters of Charity. The love and compassion extended to those adults dying of TB and AIDS and the gratitude of those afflicted was a profound experience. The needs of orphaned and challenged children gives witness to recognizing charity as fundamental in our lives.

The school of Our Lady of Lourdes shows the spirit and potential of this island. To see the parish gather for the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes and raise a joyous song of celebration and thanksgiving was unforgettable. Fr. Herve is in charge of a special place. —Jim

Haiti Revealed

My wake up call this morning was the chorus of the dogs barking, the birds chirping, the rooster crowing... followed by the fresh, crisp sound of the church bells. It was around 6:00 am, not so early but so different from waking up in Carroll. There was a sense of peace and tranquility as I welcomed the dawning of a new day in Haiti. The silence was broken only by the soulful and harmonious songs in church by the priest and people attending Mass. Their voices sound celestial and very soothing. The early morning spiritual songs reminded me so much of my experiences in the past when I have visited convents and monasteries; what a refreshing, peaceful and joyful way of starting out a new day. (continued on calendar)