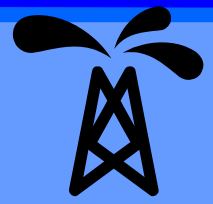




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A Cup of Water

“The Needs are Greater than Ever”

I have just been to Ash Wednesday services with Fr. Joe. It has been a great joy to have him here with us for a short time before he has to return to Haiti . He is his same old cheerful, enjoyable self but when he has an opportunity to talk about the events following the January 12th earthquake, one can sense the intense strain it has taken on him.

We have been able to develop a functional, positive plan of action that will continue our mission of economic development and education for lasting relief for the people of Haiti. We hope to get the schools at Numero Deux and Ravine Sable completed in order to make room for the tremendous increase in the number of parents asking for their children’s admission into our schools. We hope to continue with the drilling of wells to provide for the incredible increase in demand for potable water. We hope to provide more humanitarian aid for the families already there and their relatives and friends who are pouring into the Jeremie region hoping to find a place to stay with food and medical attention for their families. We hope to do much but the needs are greater than ever. This emergency has greatly depleted our funds. The call for help caused us to have to use general funds which we hoped to dedicate for ongoing projects.

We know that you have been bombarded by requests for help for Haiti . God bless you for what you have done but we need your help to send funds to areas of Haiti that are not receiving any significant help. The attention is on Port-au-Prince and well it should be. Our families and friends who had a hard time supporting themselves are now being called upon to help others out of their meager resources. In this time of dire circumstances, Haiti Mission is appealing to you to help us help some villagers who are in the midst of the relief effort, but who are the last to be sent any help. The population of the villages has more than doubled with reports that there are as many as twenty people staying in and around some of the village huts.

As I write this on Ash Wednesday, the readings remind us all to reflect upon the shortness of life and the need to change. As I returned home to spend a pleasant evening with my family, one of my sons shared something very meaningful during our family prayer time. He said that he has had a tough time keeping his two sons healthy the past few weeks as they battled colds and bronchitis. He couldn’t even imagine what it would be like to try to cope in a situation such as families find themselves in Haiti .

After attending one of the Masses that Fr. Joe said on this day, Marian Schwab , an alumni of our Haiti Mission trips, wrote the following. I thought you might appreciate her insights and also might follow her wonderful example of spreading the message of the work of Haiti Mission.

Ash Wednesday inevitably follows Mardi Gras. Amid the beads caught in tree branches and turning to colored dust in the streets as cars pass, the ashes of Ash Wednesday had particular meaning for me this year.

This morning, "our man in Haiti " of the local Haiti Mission -- the stouthearted Father Joe -- celebrated Mass in Houma , and preached about the ashes of Port au Prince and the surrounding cities.

(He had managed to get a plane out of Santo Domingo with his father who had medical procedures scheduled in the US prior to the earthquake.)

Father Joe spoke about his own struggle to believe that so many people could be dead, about the days of trying to find out about the fate of his own family, about weeping uncontrollably but trying not to let the people see him, when what they needed from a pastor was a message of comfort and hope. He spoke about his prayer to believe in the love of God in the middle of the tremendous destruction and suffering, and about the emotional impact for the people of losing "our father" the Archbishop of Port au Prince.

Quoting scripture, his Ash Wednesday message about "now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" was powerful when he spoke about how quickly and without warning everyone had died. Today -- now - - is the only time we know we have. Tomorrow is not real for all those pushed into mass graves in Haiti , or for any of us who may not see another dawn.

On Monday night, I had gone to a gathering with him, where he expressed gratitude for the immediacy of emotional support and financial help he had received from Haiti Mission . He said he has received many promises of help from others, but so far, none has come yet for the people streaming into Jeremie except from Haiti Mission . The government, he said, is directing all the aid to Port au Prince -- which of course needs help -- but hundreds of thousands of people have fled into the countryside, and they need help too.

Ships headed elsewhere, he said, cannot get clearance to dock anywhere except Port-au-Prince. Yet in Port-au-Prince, there are inevitable problems with the distribution of food and clothes and medicine; and anything that is supposed to reach the areas outside Port-au-Prince disappears before it ever gets there. As a result, sending money to reputable organizations on the ground is still the best way to help Haiti . I wish that you all could have met him and heard the pain in his voice as he talked.

.....So far, I've personally received more than \$5000 that has gone to Jeremie for relief through Haiti Mission ; and others here are likewise receiving checks from their friends and family. Thanks for all you have sent to me and to other good organizations; and thanks for all you are doing where you are to help with Haiti relief.

Marian

So, what is God telling you? Continue to pray. I prayed before I began writing this. I ask you to pray before you respond. If you are reading this in a house with a roof on it, with air-conditioning and heating and you have food in your belly and in your refrigerator, you know, as well as I do, that we are blessed beyond the wildest dreams of so many people in the world but especially those now in Haiti. Thanks for your consideration in this time of special, urgent needs. At the presentation to the Rotary club in Houma, when Fr. Joe was asked how people could help, he responded, “Whatever you can do, continue to do it.” I know you will do your best. God Bless!

(FYI – One of the most popular initiatives Haiti Mission has developed is the “Ugly Card – Beautiful results” distribution program. It has been a simple but very effective way to distribute funds and supplies to a relatively large number of people in an efficient and effective way. We are including it in this appeal as an example of the type of direct aid that Haiti Mission provides and a way for you to see your gift go to a specific family).

****Special Family Support Appeal****

Our annual mission trip is right around the corner – April 5th to April 19th. As always, this year's trip is filled with excitement and expectation. We always look forward to seeing our friends again, visiting families – always with the hope that things are improving and that one day they can take the reins and be self-sufficient again. As I reminisce, I think back on the days when there was nothing going on in the villages.

When we first arrived, the region seemed like a lifeless wasteland. Now, after ten years of working together, the villages are teeming with activity. There are schools, animals, craft and food stands and happy faces all around the area. The water wells have also begun to make a major impact on the lives of everyone.



One of the most gratifying parts of the trip is our family support program. After we had been working in Haiti a few years, it was brought to our attention that there were some very needy people. Everyone was poor but there were elderly, blind, lame, widows and orphans everywhere –the really poor. Fr. Joe, the pastor of the local church, asked if we could do something special for about thirty families that had critical needs. We came up with the idea of asking friends to help us by giving \$35 so that each family could have a thanksgiving basket of rice, beans, sugar, flour and cooking oil. Since the average Haitian makes less than \$2 per day and these people living out in the country had no money, we decided to give them \$15 in their currency and give them \$20 worth of commodities which we purchase locally in order to stimulate the area economy. As we walked up and down the mountainsides delivering our “love packages” - after expressing their deep gratitude - the family would point to their neighbor who looked as bad off, if not worse than the family we were visiting, and ask if somehow we could help them. I would write down their names and say that, if God would send the funds to me, I would help their neighbor next year. Incredibly, each year we have always received enough to help the new neighbors on our list. This process has been repeated every year so that this year we have approximately 450 families counting on their “love package” of commodities and a little cash.

One of the most moving of all our visits was the time we visited the hut of Mr. Delouis Joseph. Mr. Delouis was 87 at the time and had been blind for a number of years. When we arrived at his house with our “love package” and explained who we were and what we were there for, he raised his hands and began praising God. He began to tell us that he hadn't eaten anything in three days and that morning he had begged God to let him die. Instead he said, God sent you here to give me hope. He began crying and asking God to let him live at least until next year so he could see us again. God honored his request. Over and over we have the same thing happen. We show up and people begin praising God for what you give to us to bring to our friends which represents God's love and God's goodness for these struggling people.

As I have already stated, this year, with the January 12th, horror in Haiti earthquake, our resources are challenged. We hear the words from the prophet Jeremiah, ***"For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*** (Jeremiah 29:11) And also from the great Apostle Paul who teaches us how to love and how to hope. ***"If God is for us, who is against us?"*** (Romans 8:31) God is for us. God is for the oppressed and the reconciler. God is on the side of truth and of love. As we continue to visit and share our resources and our love with our Haitian friends, they know God is for them, God is with them and God loves them.

Now that our family list and the population of the villages has grown so much, we have had to visit them in groups. In order to keep it dignified and efficient, we came up with the idea of sending invitations to the families who would receive their love package that day – invitations to come to church to celebrate Mass together, to pray together and then to share with them our gifts. This has worked wonderfully. The process has been very orderly. People are very appreciative. Most importantly it focuses the entire event on God and His goodness.

I have enclosed one of the invitations in this mail out for you to see and to use. This is your invitation to share your blessings with a family who can only return a soiled invitation. That soiled invitation that you will get back will represent a lot of things. It will have travelled from your heart, several hundred miles to a family in a remote village in Haiti

and love. Fingerprints from soiled fingers that have toiled and struggled to keep body and soul together. Fingerprints that say, “Thanks, for bringing us love and hope!

For every \$35 dollars you include, I will send back to you an ugly card with a note expressing beautiful results.

God Bless. Deacon Lloyd

FYI:

Current Happenings

Don't forget to mark your calendars

February 28th - Corks n Canvas fundraiser at all of their sites.

March 19th - Haiti Mission Golf tournament.

Check the website for more details. www.haitimissioninc.com

Fr. Joe's Reflections

We were really blessed to have Fr. Joe visit us here for a few days last week. As you have read, he had to bring his aging ailing parents to Miami for medical attention which had been scheduled prior to the January 12th earthquake. Because of the inability to get a commercial flight back to Haiti for a couple of weeks, he had a five day window to come be with us, pray with us, play with us and let us love and care for him until he had to go back and face the incredible tasks at hand. He was interviewed by newspapers, radio and TV stations while he was here. A couple of statements that he made during those talks and interviews I thought would be worthy of our reflection. He repeated over and over that Haiti Mission was the first to contact him to ask how he and his community had fared. He also said Haiti Mission was the first to send any financial help to allow him to minister to the immediate needs. Most importantly and profoundly he said that what has happened and the response on the part of so many “has made me reflect on the importance of solidarity. We are not abandoned. We are not alone.” Haiti Mission's real role in the lives of our Haitian brothers and sisters is to give them hope – to let them know that they are not abandoned, they are not alone.