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A Cup of Water

## **\*\*Special family support appeal\*\***

Our annual mission trip is right around the corner – April 13<sup>th</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>. 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 life-less wasteland. Now, after ten years of working together, the villages are teeming with activity. There are schools, animals, craft stands 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 \$30 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 \$15 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 250 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 represents God's love and God's goodness for these struggling people.

This year our resources are challenged. You have all done so much already this year which has been a particularly difficult year not only for us but also especially for Haiti. Four major hurricanes further devastated the devastation. Flooding in some areas further acerbated the crisis. High food and gas prices here were magnified there with rice, which is the staple of their diets, doubling in price. As you know, here in the U.S. financial woes are plaguing many of us - all the more reason to double our efforts and trust in God. 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 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 out 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 it will come back to you with their finger prints on it. Fingerprints that have held this invitation of hope and love. Fingerprints from soiled fingers that have toiled and struggled to keep body and soul together. Fingerprints that say, “thanks, I love you, I appreciate your solidarity with us here!”

I know you can help in some way. Enclosed is the invitation and a stamped return envelope. If you can help with \$35, it will help us help a family. If you can't afford \$35, anything will help. If you can't afford anything at this time, I'm asking for you to say a prayer for the family who will receive the invitation, put it in the stamped envelope and send it back – I will understand – and that prayer will be important to us as we continue to invite friends to help friends.

## **MATCHING FUNDS**

What has happened really special this year is that we have gotten an offer of matching funds. That's right!! This year we have a donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, who has offered to match up to \$4000 of funds to help feed the families in Haiti. For every dollar we receive, we will receive a matching grant of up to \$4000. What a blessing! Also, another reason why we would like to have as many envelopes returned as possible is that we told the donor that we have a mailing list of about 600 names. The donor said that if we receive at least half of the envelopes back, with or without donations, he would add another \$500 bonus. **BONUS MONEY!!** Bonus money just for returning the envelope.

### **Thanks!!**

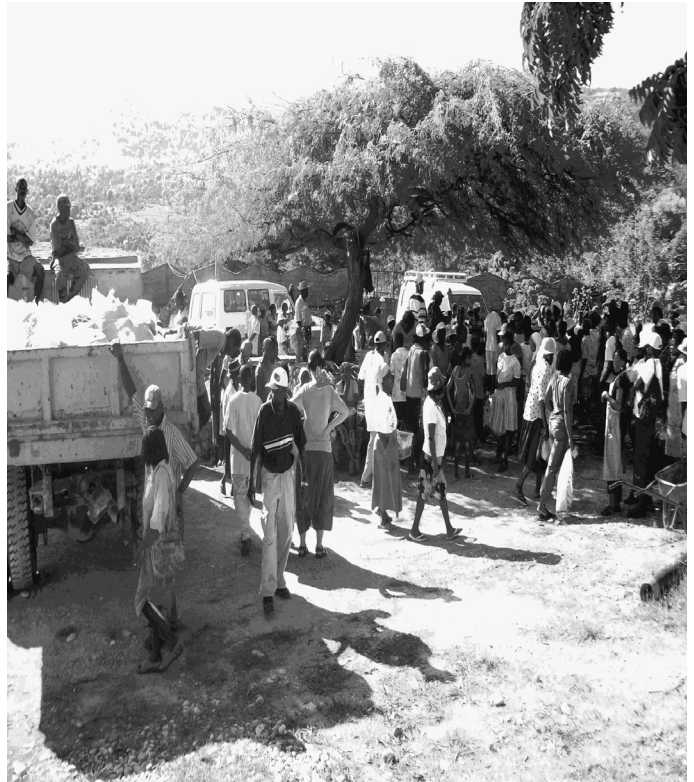
Thanks again for all you have done – for your prayers, your generous support and your love. Again this year we are depending upon you to help our families who count on us for their yearly gift. Can you imagine waiting all year for thirty-five dollars!? Yet this \$35 has transformed lives and has transformed two villages. What we spend at one meal has made such a difference in the lives of these beautiful people.

And this year we promise you a bonus!! We will receive matching funds for whatever you can give – dollar for dollar. We will also receive a bonus if we get 300 envelopes back. But you will receive a bonus! Just fill out your name and address on the invitation and I will personally deliver your gift and then mail you the invitation back with the name of the family on the card along with their dirty, loving, hopeful fingerprints.

Can you help? I know you will! If you are able to do more, we'll fill out as many invitation cards as you would like and mail you as many dirty, torn and tattered family invitations as you sponsor. Families are counting on us. I know we can count on you.

God Bless you for all you do!! Shortly after you receive your invitation in the mail we'll send you a report on this year's trip. Thanks for your prayers. Don't forget to visit our website for all the current happenings.

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



### ***Faie's Facts:***

Haiti is the poorest nation in the western hemisphere. With 81% of the population earning less than one dollar a day, life is extremely harsh for the people of Haiti. Over half of Haiti's children suffer from malnutrition. Subsidized, imported food and food aid has eroded the profitability of local Haitian food production, driving many Haitian farmers out of business and leaving Haiti's population vulnerable to economic forces far beyond their control. This poverty is the result of, and continues to be exacerbated by, years of political unrest in the country.

Women in Haiti bear the brunt of these problems. More than 70% of Haiti's households are headed by women, often with little or no support from men. Women are the backbone of the Haitian economy, through their entrepreneurial efforts within the domestic economy. Haitian women are making a difference in their country's economy as they struggle to pull themselves out of poverty.

They cook over charcoal fires, wash clothes by hand, and tote water for drinking and bathing. Haitian women also play a central role in Haitian agriculture. Alongside men, they plant and harvest crops and raise livestock.

The sheer amount of work which Haitian women undertake can be exhausting but, amazingly, many also dedicate themselves to community projects as well. As they organize themselves, they develop workable solutions to address the difficulties they face.

Mrs. Jeanette's founding of the Woman-to-woman club will be a tremendous help for these struggling women who often have no place to turn when they face medical emergencies.