



St. Francis-Haiti Outreach
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NEWSLETTER

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This month's pictures show Dr. Jimmy in the Bob's Clinic pharmacy which you make possible and two girls from Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette Catholic School at Mass.

News from LaGonave: Bob's Clinic and Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette School

Bob's Clinic continues to be such a blessing to the people of LaGonave! As I reported in the last newsletter, Dr. Jimmy Fort, a native of Port-au-Prince is our new doctor. He has been busy seeing patients and recently, was able to refer one of our young students who has an endocrine disease, to Port-au-Prince for a specialist consultation. Through your generosity we have been able to provide the supplements this student needs to become stronger.

CLINIC CHALLENGE!!! St. Francis is so fortunate to have a generous parishioner who has issued a challenge grant to our parish to help fund the operations of the clinic. If we raise \$10,000, this parishioner will match us dollar for dollar! A total contribution of \$20,000 will go so far to help the people. Please consider making a donation!

Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette school is full of spirit and learning! The new pastor of St. Louis, Fr. Arsene Beneche is meeting and working with the teachers and parents to prepare the school for opening in September. Even though school does not meet for classes during the summer months, the food program at the school continues and your generosity enables the children to have one meal each weekday of the summer at the school. There are 34 students of the total enrollment who are not yet sponsored. A new class of First Kindergarten will also join us in September! Just \$25 per month will help give a student the gift of an education and hope. Please consider becoming a sponsor!

Our twin parish of St. Louis also is active and vibrant! There will be a wonderful "fete" for all parishioners on the feast day of St. Louis which is August 25. This is a beautiful celebration for the people of the parish and often the Bishop will attend!

Below you will find a summary of the slideshow and talk about our trip in April that was presented to the parish in June. In addition, the Haiti Outreach Ministry will have a table at the Stewardship Fair on September 14 and 15 where we will share with you the many beautiful pictures from our trip and be happy to visit and answer any questions. Please visit us!

Thank you so much for your support of the people at our twin parish of St. Louis. You are truly making a difference in so many lives, and Fr. Beneche and the people of Pointe-a-Raquette appreciate your support more than can be expressed. They continue to pray for us at St. Francis each day. For more information about our programs, please contact Marie Thomas, 540-255-3166 or steuart@cfw.com.

Men anpil chay pa lou. Many hands make the load lighter. Bondye beni ou. God bless you.

ST. FRANCIS APRIL TRIP REPORT

Father Joe, Jim and Tamara Ridenour, Dave Fritz and Marie Thomas visited our twin parish on the island of La Gonave, Haiti from April 9-16. We left St. Francis at 1 a.m. so that we would be at Reagan Airport by 4 a.m. to check in for our 6 a.m. International flight to Haiti! We arrived in Port-au-Prince about 10 a.m. after a short layover in Miami. We were greeted by Fr. Roosevelt who delivered us to our domestic flight to the island. This flight was on a 9-seater plane and we landed on the beach in Anse-a-Galets after a 45 minute flight. We spent our first evening in Anse-a-Galets at the parish of St. Isidore, the twin parish of Blessed Sacrament in Harrisonburg. The next morning we drove—packed like sardines—over the mountains to the other side of the mountain where Pointe-a-Raquette is located. This drive of about 20 miles took us over 2 ½ hours because the roads are so difficult. But we were greeted enthusiastically at our twin parish of St. Louis in time for the midday meal!

Our goals on this visit were to meet and learn more about the members of St. Louis Parish and their needs, to visit Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette school, assess the current set-up of the food program and additional needs of the students and teachers in the community, to visit Bob's Clinic and meet Dr. Jimmy, as well as assess ongoing needs for the clinic and provide support as needed, and to establish contacts within the community to assist us with better communication and knowledge of changing needs in a timely fashion.

We walked through the streets of Pointe-a-Raquette and met many in the community. Homes are constructed of scrap wood and tin, usually one or two rooms with a dirt floor and no plumbing or electricity. Most residents walk over a mile to the free well to obtain water for bathing and washing clothes. This well is also where the animals go to get water. Everywhere the people were grateful and happy to see us. We met Mr. Fredo, a blind man who lives alone, on a steep hill above a ravine, and whose only meals come from a program supported by the parish. We met a crippled young man who is literally able to “run” on the crutches the parish has supplied for him. Without these, he would be confined. We met families who were so happy to be part of the school.

We spent mornings at the school and saw the children at work and play. They work hard, and we hope to enhance their opportunity to learn English with a newer curriculum. Speaking English will add opportunity. The parish supports a School Food program which ensures that the children get one hot meal at school—even during the summer when school is out! Early in the morning—about 7AM, our hired cooks begin to cook in the “kitchen.” They start a charcoal fire and have to buy water from the community well. After several hours of patient cooking, the students receive their daily meal of rice and beans around 11AM.

We visited Bob's clinic and met Dr. Jimmy and a young patient who was on an IV—possible through your generosity. The parents were very anxious and by the end of our visit, we were able to see him recover. One of the needs of the clinic is a new delivery table and we will help Dr. Jimmy obtain a new one this fall. There are always needs in the pharmacy, but it is fairly well-stocked and he is able to respond to the needs of the community as best he can.

What we learned: St. Louis is a vibrant parish and Pointe-a-Raquette is a lovely community. The new pastor, Father Arsene Beneche is a kind and generous priest, who communicates promptly. The rectory of the parish is a real hub of the town and is a safe place for those needing help to come. We met many hungry people and we know that the hurricanes in 2012 decimated the crops on La Gonave. We are making sure that the children are fed adequately to meet their nutritional needs. For many, the school meal is their only meal of the day. We were impressed that everyone we met was so thankful and prayerful about the help we give. We will continue to get to know them better as family, even with the difficulty in communication. We left the island feeling deep appreciation for the spiritual gifts we received from our brothers and sisters sharing their deep faith, their love of God, and their gratitude. We are blessed to have this opportunity to serve.

Below are two Haitian proverbs that are so relevant to our work in Haiti—Thank you for all you do!
Lespwa fe viv. *Hope makes one live.* Piti piti swazo fe nich. *Little by little the bird builds its nest.*