



St. Francis- Haiti Outreach
P.O. Box 2563
Staunton, VA 24402-2563
NEWSLETTER
July/August 2012
Volume 6 No.2



This month we meet Joseph Louis and Constannel Bonheur, two young men who are attending university through the sponsorship of a donor at St. Francis. Joseph is studying computer technology and Constannel is studying agronomy. Constannel will work with the people on LaGonave to help them with their gardens and farming techniques following graduation. Here we see him in his garden in the mountains north of Pointe-a-Raquette.

News from La Gonave

This week, on Saturday, August 25th, the people of St. Louis Parish will celebrate the feast day of their patron saint, St. Louis, King of France. In Haiti, this is a very important time, and it is celebrated with Mass, with special music and dance that the choir and dancers have been preparing for months, and with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It is a community celebration as well as a religious one, so Catholics and non-Catholics share in the festival with food and musical performances. The festival brings to Pointe-a-Raquette people from all over the island as well as many people from the United States, Canada and Europe who have ties to LaGonave. Many people will come from the chapels that are part of the parish of St. Louis, and they will sleep outdoors in the church compound. The women will cook outdoors for large numbers of people. Fr. Chadique will provide food for the people from the chapels during the celebration. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Haiti as they celebrate the feast of St. Louis.

News from the Haitian Commission for Catholic Education

In June, the Haitian Commission for Catholic Education released the final report of a National Survey of Catholic Schools in Haiti. This first-of-its-kind study was funded by Catholic Relief Services and undertaken by the University of Notre Dame in Port-au-Prince. All Catholic schools in Haiti were surveyed "to assess their current status and to inform plans for strengthening them." The Report covers six aspects of Catholic education in Haiti: school characteristics, Catholic identity, school quality, governance and management, finances, and facilities. Here is a brief summary of some of the findings.

1. Thirty-five % of Catholic schools are fully licensed as compared to 8% of all non-public schools.
2. Almost no Catholic schools have access to technology. Only 7% have Internet access, 20% have access to one or more computer, and a sizeable majority lack access to electrical power. (In Pointe- a-Raquette, there is no Internet access.)
3. Sixty-one % of Catholic schools lack a feeding program for students. Forty-five % of survey respondents identify the absence of school feeding as a barrier to student learning. (We are very blessed to be able to provide a hot meal to our students each day.)
4. Teacher quality and the need for teacher training were the most frequently cited challenges. The bishops will seek partnerships with both Catholic and public universities and colleges in Haiti to address teacher training needs.

5. Only 11% of Catholic schools currently receive public subsidies. Of these schools, 44% did not receive the subsidies in full or on time.

News from Bob's Clinic

“Dr.” Brunel, an experienced mid-level healthcare provider, continues to do an excellent job providing care at Bob's Clinic. Recently, he saw a young man and diagnosed a life-threatening condition requiring immediate surgical intervention. The patient was transported to the mainland where he was treated and is now doing well. We continue with recruiting efforts to bring a physician to Pointe-a-Raquette, but, so far, we have not been successful. We hope to have a group go to LaGonave this fall, and we will try to meet with the administration at Notre Dame Medical School to review the possibility of having senior medical students come to Pointe-a-Raquette. In Haiti, the fourth year of medical school is called the social services year, and students are sent to rural clinics to gain practical experience. We would welcome the opportunity to have senior medical students serve at Bob's Clinic.

Community Gardens

It has been a very difficult rainy season in Pointe-a-Raquette. Even though the rains generally start in May, there has been very little rain over the last four months. Most of the people who planted gardens have not been able to keep them going due to the severe drought. In the mountains, the situation is somewhat better, but the farmers also have had a difficult time with their crops. There is a trickle down economic effect from this. Usually, if the gardens are fruitful, there is sometimes some extra produce available for people to sell at the market, and they can make some income. This year, as well as last year, the rainy season was so bad that families could not even grow enough to supplement their diets. More people are hungry and in need of food assistance.

We hope you will come to Assisi Hall on September 9th at 10am to hear Dave Fritz, a parishioner at Blessed Sacrament Parish, speak of the spiritual transformation that occurred in his life as a result of his first visit to Haiti. It was a life-changing experience for him, and he will share it with us.

As always, thank you so much for all you do for the people of our twin parish of St. Louis. The assistance provided by the parishioners at St. Francis is much appreciated by Fr. Chadique and the people there. We recently received a communication from Bishop Erick Toussaint, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. He says “When you send money to Pointe-a-Raquette, you help the poor, the children, and the sick. We thank you and we pray for all the parishioners at St. Francis. May God bless and protect you.”

For more information about St. Francis' programs in Pointe-a-Raquette, contact Dr. Linda Kofeldt at 434-825-3841 or 540-885-7763 or lkofeldt@comcast.net Keep up with our Haiti Outreach Ministry at www.stfrancisparish.org

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