



St. Francis-Haiti Outreach
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NEWSLETTER

March 2014
Volume 8 No. 1



This month's pictures show Dr. Linda Kofeldt with patients from Bob's Clinic during one of her many trips to Pointe-a-Raquette and Pope Francis looking at pictures of the parish of St. Louis that Jeanne Branch from St. John's has handed to him!! Learn more by reading on!

A short history of our twinning relationship and a tribute to Dr. Linda Kofeldt

St. Francis' involvement with the parish on the Island of La Gonave has continued for 35 years, and has grown due to the dedication and love of Dr. Linda Kofeldt. In 1964 Missionhurst Fathers had established 2 churches on the island—St. Isadore in Anse-a-Galets and St. Louis King of France in Pointe-a-Raquette. In 1979, Fr. Bill Quigly, a Pennsylvania native, toured the valley of Virginia while visiting the United States and appealed to churches to help support ministry work in Haiti, especially on La Gonave.

Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Harrisonburg and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Staunton answered his call, committing to help the island's 2 churches. They began taking up offerings for Haiti and sending the proceeds to the priests on the island.

Over the next decades, the collections and remittances continued. Prayers were offered but few personal connections were built. In 1985 Richmond's Bishop Sullivan launched a twinning program. The goal was to build real personal and reciprocal relationships between parishes in Virginia and parishes in Haiti. While the formal agreement was with the Diocese of Hinche on Haiti's central plateau, St. Francis and Blessed Sacrament opted to keep and strengthen their ties to La Gonave which is in the Diocese of Port-au-Prince.

In March 2002 Collette Pettit was the first St. Francis parishioner to visit La Gonave. She made it her personal mission to see the parish at the other end of St. Francis' donations. Colette's personal visits to La Gonave led her to work enthusiastically with the St. Francis Haiti Ministry Committee for our twin parish of St. Louis in a more formal way. Collette's enthusiasm and energy attracted the attention of Dr. Linda Kofeldt who then made her first trip to La Gonave in 2004. With the interchange between parishes it was determined that there was a great need for a parish school and a medical clinic.

Through the generosity of parishioners and others, St. Francis was able to help the parishioners of St. Louis realize their dream for a school and Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette school was started in October 2004. A main goal of the parish was to provide a meal during the school day to the children. To help support the school, sponsorships of the children are offered. We also have generous donors who sponsor some of the teachers. The school is funded this way and employs 24 teachers.

Also, on her visit to the island in 2004, Dr. Linda learned that the only way a person living in the town of Pointe-a-Raquette could get medical help was to travel either by boat to Miragoane on the mainland, or by motorcycle on a rugged road over the mountain to Anse-a-Galets. She got to work!

Bob's clinic opened in April 2005, with a bequest from a generous St. Francis Parishioner. He wanted to be anonymous and Linda talked him into at least putting his first name on the clinic. Bob's clinic handles between 400-450 patients per month. To help support the clinic, a very generous parishioner established an annual challenge grant for \$10,000. This effectively raises \$20,000 for the clinic annually. The clinic employs a doctor, nurse, assistant, pharmacist, lab technician, receptionist, cleaning lady and yard help.

Linda also gained the involvement of many people outside of the parish. In April 2006 funds raised through the Haiti Outreach Foundation installed 14 solar panels and a water pump for the town of Pointe-a-Raquette. Students from Blue Ridge Community College traveled to la Gonave to complete projects. The Staunton Rotary Club gave funds for a well to be dug in the mountains for an area called Terre Seche—which literally translates to DRY LAND.

All of this was accomplished through faith, hard work and prayer during tumultuous political times for Haiti and with the interruption of the 2010 earthquake. We thank God that He put Dr. Linda Kofeldt in our midst. She showed us through her beautiful example how to be the heart, hands and feet of Our Lord to those who are the poorest of the poor. We will miss her very much. Pray for all of us as we continue His work.

Linda carried Haiti in her heart.



Words of comfort to all of us from our brothers and sisters in Haiti:

God is preparing a place for Linda She will be a Saint. May her soul be in peace in the heaven. I am praying for her and I believe she will pray for us too.

As always, 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.

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

What about the photo of Pope Francis holding pictures of OUR twin parish in his hands??

This past fall, Jeanne Branch, who is the Director of Christian Formation for Adults at St. John's Evangelist in Waynesboro, was in Rome for a conference. St. John's partners with St. Francis in providing food for the parish of St. Louis and Jeanne is the coordinator for the Food Program for the parish of St. Louis. She brought pictures of the parish on the outside chance that she would have the opportunity to ask Pope Francis bless us and our work there. The Holy Spirit put Jeanne in the right spot at the right time and the Pope stopped to speak to her! She gave him the pictures and he asked about the people and how we are helping. In the original picture, you can actually see the steeple of the St. Louis parish church in the photograph the Pope is holding!! What a blessed moment for all of us!

There are many exciting developments in the parish of St. Louis and I will write about those in the next newsletter. Please continue to lift up the St. Francis Haiti Outreach Ministry to Our Lord.

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.

For more information about our programs, please contact Marie Thomas, 540-255-3166 or stuart@cfw.com.