



St. Francis-Haiti Outreach
P.O. Box 2563
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NEWSLETTER
November/December 2012
Volume 6 No. 3



This month's pictures show Mr. Fredo, a blind man who relies on his neighbors and help from St. Francis parish to live in Pointe-a-Raquette, and a student at Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette Catholic School.

A Christmas Message From Fr. Chadique

Thank you for all that you do for us. Joyeux Noel! Merry Christmas! Bon Annee! Happy New Year!

Message From Dr. Linda

As many of you know, I have been dealing with a serious illness this past year. I am no longer able to travel to LaGonave to our twin parish of St. Louis, and it is time for me to pass the title of Coordinator of the St. Francis-Haiti Outreach Ministry to someone else. The Holy Spirit has been hard at work to insure that we find the right person, and I am pleased to announce that Marie Thomas, a longtime parishioner at St. Francis and a member of the Haiti Outreach Ministry Committee, has agreed to take on the role of Coordinator. She will be working very closely with Jim Ridenour, who supervises the counting and deposit of donations, and Colette Petitt, who is instrumental in administering the School Sponsorship Program. Jim will also be assisted by Barney Cincotta, another longtime parishioner and new volunteer for Haiti Outreach.

It has been my privilege to be your "eyes and ears" on LaGonave for the past eight years. The parishioners at St. Francis are very committed to the people of our twin parish, and, over the years, we have been able to make a real difference in thousands of lives through the founding of Our Lady of Pointe-a-Raquette Catholic School, Bob's Clinic, and several food programs to feed the hungry. We have provided water through solar power. We have collaborated with colleagues at the Richmond Diocese through the Battaglia Fund and with our friends at Blue Ridge Community College to teach people to plant gardens and to raise rabbits. We have been very blessed to work in close collaboration with the parishioners at St. John's on projects at St. Anthony's House, a home located next to the rectory where elderly and physically and mentally ill people have a place to live and are fed daily. We have helped our brothers and sisters to survive through hurricanes and a devastating earthquake. Most importantly, we have forged a true bond, a true feeling of community, between the people of St. Francis and the people of St. Louis. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of St. Francis' commitment to our twin parish. It has been a pleasure for me to write these Newsletters to keep you up to date on what is happening in Pointe-a-Raquette. Marie Thomas will continue the tradition.

Our good friend, Dave Fritz, was in Pointe-a-Raquette recently to be my "eyes and ears". He has written a wonderful report on what is happening in Pointe-a-Raquette now. Thanks, Dave.

Dear Friends of La Gonave,

I had the opportunity to visit St. Francis' twin parish of St. Louis King of France in Pointe-a-Raquette, Haiti, in November. During my visit, I met people from the community, observed parish life, visited Bob's Clinic and took photos of the children at the parish school.

It's been a difficult fall in Pointe-a-Raquette. Hurricane Sandy and another unnamed storm washed ashore from the south, flooding low areas where people live and damaging the simple homes that dot the coastline, especially in the nearby village of Nan Boukan. People are making repairs the best they can, but the greater damage likely was to the island's winter crops, many of which were washed away. This damage won't be fully felt until spring, which would have been harvest time. With the likelihood of a stunted harvest, the U.S. Agency for International Development recently issued a famine watch, which shows the potential for serious food shortages on the island as well as a few less isolated areas of Haiti for this winter and spring. The storms, too, disrupted food deliveries to Pointe-a-Raquette for a time, but those were reported nearing normal in late November.

The floods brought a spike in cholera cases, especially in the isolated village of Lotorre in the eastern portion of St. Louis parish. During my visit, patients receiving IV treatment for cholera packed Bob's Clinic on the church grounds. One old man was tended to on a gurney parked on an open porch just outside the ward that housed several women and one child who were receiving care. He was listless on my first visit and up and around the next day, his condition improving. Cholera, with quick treatment, is curable. Because of St. Francis' generosity, people who make it to the clinic are surviving.

Although Father Chadique was away during my brief visit, the church remained a center of activity. On weekdays the first bell rings at 5 a.m. By second bell at 5:30 people are gathered for the morning rosary, their voices drifting out of the big yellow church and filling the narrow streets. A morning communion service welcomes the dawn.

By 7 a.m. children are arriving for school. They sing their national anthem and begin their day with a prayer. A new uniform shop takes up part of the school's auditorium, where tailors stitch fabric using manual sewing machines. Many students are still waiting on new uniforms, replacing mostly white uniforms that the school's principal said were too easily soiled.

The people remain hopeful and thankful for all God provides for them, including financial assistance and prayers from their twin parish. They look forward to the day when they can again welcome their brothers and sisters in Christ from St. Francis parish to their small seaside town. Until then, they remember you in their prayers.

David Fritz, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, Harrisonburg

Trip to La Gonave

Colette Petitt and two other parishioners from St. John's will be traveling to LaGonave in February. If you would like to send a letter to your sponsored child, please mail it to the address on the Newsletter or take it to the St. Francis office before February 12th. A group from St. Francis plans to travel to our twin parish after Easter. Check the next Newsletter for more details. We are considering how best to deal with the predicted food shortage. If nothing else, it will drive up food prices. We will try to buy a large quantity of rice, beans, and oil at today's prices and store them at the parish.

As always, thank you so much for everything you do for the people of our twin parish. When you support the St. Francis-Haiti Outreach Ministry, you truly are making a difference in many lives.

Men anpil chay pa lou. Many hands make the load lighter. Bondye beni ou. God bless you. Jwayeu Nwel! Merry Christmas from all of us at the St. Francis-Haiti Outreach Ministry.