



October 2008

VOLUNTEER MINISTRIES IN HAITI

A monthly newsletter to report on developments of the Volunteer Ministries in Haiti, a program of the Xaverian Brothers supported by the Diocese of Richmond. Further information is available from the Haitian Ministry Commission, Diocese of Richmond, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond VA 23294 (telephone: 804-359-5661) (fax: 804-358-9159) (e-mail: pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org) (website: www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti/hat111.htm)

LETTER FROM BROTHER HARRY ECCLES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, I returned to Hinche after my long weekend in Port-au-Prince at the Sant Zaverien. As I entered the gate of the orphanage, I met the boys and girls returning from Opening of School Mass at the Cathedral. A month late because of the bad weather, but spirits were high and our freshly-painted school building was sparkling. We still have the almost daily seasonal rain in the evening or night, and we still have to grab the squeegees but not every day.

TWO DAYS LATER, Br. Mike McCarthy and Jean-Louis left to visit the States, and on Friday Greg and Elizabeth Mason arrived to spend a few days with us. (Greg was a Xaverian Volunteer a few years ago, and his recent bride Elizabeth served at the Louverture-Cleary School in Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti, for two years.) With all the comings and goings, the Haiti bond is quite evident.

INTERNET GLITCHES last month prevented me from saluting two other visitors: Ryan Kenrick and Zach Crowe. Ryan was a volunteer here with Greg, and Zach also has been a good friend to Haiti. Ties that bind, indeed!

SCHOOL HAS STARTED, but not for everyone. The public schools are not equal to the task, and even inexpensive private schools (primary and secondary) are too expensive for many people. The other day as I started to go into town, a neighbor of many years came to see if I could help him with a grade-school bill of \$300, and when I returned from my errand there was a single mother of five with a similar request (actually, she's not single; her husband has been in Port-au-Prince looking vainly for work). Because of your generosity I was

able to help these two--and others--but there are still many I have to refuse. My goal isn't to solve all problems, and I'm glad that we are able to do as much as we do.

MY VISIT TO THE SANT presented problems of a larger scope. A university student's support runs between three and four thousand dollars a year, and some of the young men I accepted have lost the support that they had when they entered. No alternative but to try to make ends meet, and that's what we are doing, thanks to you.

THANKS ALSO TO YOU for supplementing your gifts at the time of the hurricanes. We're still coming out of that, but among my clients, schooling is the big concern. People endure hunger and other hardships, but they'll make any sacrifice for school.

BEING A SCHOOL PERSON myself, I wasn't happy that the state closed all schools for a month because bad weather was a problem in some places. The reasoning was that in preparing for state exams, the students should all be equally disadvantaged. "Balderdash! Here at the orphanage we did our symbolic best to carry on by having optional English classes. Bro. Mike and I accepted sixty boys into four groups for two weeks, but we turned away many others. As I said, it was too little to be more than symbolic, but I still ask the "grads" What day is it? etc.

MY STUBBORN STREAK shows itself too in the modest investment of a few new rabbits, and in this case, "Try again" does seem to be working. Going with the flow seems to make sense, though, as the best results from our Pandiassou garden are fruits and peanuts. Yes, we're still responsible for the house and garden in Pandiassou, and Bro. Mike has used the house for team meetings for innovative projects, which I'm sure he'll tell you about. I'll

simply say that his energy and creativity are amazing. Mèsi, Bondye!!

I'VE WRITTEN THUS FAR with only two power breaks. Not going to push my luck, but I can say a word of wondrous praise for seeing some of the political goings-on via Katie's laptop!!!

MAY THE GOD OF MUCH GREATER WONDERS bless us all.

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LETTER FROM CHARTELIN JEAN ISAAC

With Chartelin's letter we continue our series from the Sant Zaveryen, the Xaverian Center in Port-au-Prince directed by Brother Harry Eccles, where young men from poor families live while studying at various universities in the capital.

I am a fourth year student at the medical school of the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti. My studies will be completed in 2013, including two years of service. I come from Cerca Carvajal in the Central Plateau of Haiti, not far from Hinche.

It was on September 22, at 10:30 in the morning that I decided to share with you through this newsletter how I feel, what I did during the vacation, and how I am living at the Sant.

Finishing with my final exam on June 29, I stayed a few days in Port-au-Prince and then I was gone to Cerca Carvajal. After seeing my family and visiting the Cerca clinic I went back to Hinche where I stayed for four weeks to continue my clinical practice at the Hospital Ste. Therese. That was good. Each day from nine to three I saw many cases and learned many things. I also served one week at the Whitney Clinic (the clinic of Sacre Coeur Parish in Hinche).

Then came the hurricanes and I was surprised to see how high the rivers which are around Hinche rose. All the houses near the two rivers were under the water included part of the orphanage where Brother Harry and Brother Michael live.

Here at the Sant, we are fourteen young students. We have many activities: prayer, the kitchen, cleaning, volunteer services, and studies. I wake up usually at 3:00 a.m. to study; at 5:00 a.m. it's time to pray. At 7:30 it's time to go to school because the courses start at 8:00 and continue until 5:00 pm, when I return home. There activities continue until 10:00 p.m.--time to sleep.

All those activities are possible by the grace of God through Brother Harry and our friends in the United States. With thoughts of them we go to school, we eat and we have a place to live. Thank you, God; thank you, VMH supporters; thank you, my friends in St. Edward's Parish in Richmond, Virginia. Your help is indispensable for us.

After I finish my studies I have to return to my part of the country to give some years of services--a way to give back a part of what I received.

Again, I thank you, my friends, for all that you provide me. May God continue to bless you and protect you in your work.

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As a postscript, we add part of a note Brother Harry recently received from Théony Deshommes, now a physician, who lived at the Sant during his medical training.

It is a pleasure for me to write to you in this moment. I am really satisfied with this vocation. I had the opportunity for a good rotation, and I met some moms who when they saw me said "Here is one of the doctors who helped me to give birth."

I know in all this satisfaction and all this happiness your spirit and the spirit of all Xaverians are here with me.

Thank you for all this confidence and all this investment on me. You will not be disappointed. I love you.

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