

# Twining with a Parish in Haiti: Guidelines

## Overview and Rational

As is stated in the Pastoral Plan and, following the example of St. Vincent DePaul, the Church of the Richmond Diocese is seeking to find ways to share resources with a developing country. Recognizing that the Church of Haiti is rich in many gifts but economically poor, our Diocese has respectfully chosen the country of Haiti for this outreach.

As one part of the outreach we ask each parish or institution to consider entering into a twinning relationship with a Haitian parish or other entity such as a hospital, school, or group.

Such a twinning relationship should be based on recognition that the many differences between Haiti and Virginia can provide opportunities for growth for each partner, since both possess equal dignity and equal human value.

Haiti's long history of struggle for self-determination, its proximity, its poverty, and the powerful spiritual health of its people make Haiti a unique asset to our spiritual development and fulfillment. In understanding Haiti and developing relationships with Haitians, we can better understand ourselves and the interdependence of humankind - beyond national borders.

But if we are really going to be in solidarity with the Haitian people, it is a lifetime commitment, biblically inspired and based. The American approach of going in with lots of money is not what they need and does not work. The people of Haiti know what they need. We need to listen to them and hear.

## Objectives of the Twining Relationship

- To develop a sense of solidarity for both our sisters and brothers in Haiti and parishioners in our diocese;
- To provide a sense of the universality of Christian community for both partners;
- To discover ways in which members of our Virginia communities can share their time and talent with the people of our Haitian twins, and to facilitate that sharing;
- To discover ways in which members of our Haitian twins can share their faith and hope with people of Virginia, and to facilitate that sharing;
- To be a voice for and an advocate for the people of Haiti in the U.S. and to support the actions of the U.S. that will improve the quality of life for Haitians;
- To provide sharing of the material wealth of our Virginia twins with our Haitian twins, as we listen to their needs and desires.

## Characteristics of a Healthy Twining Relationship

- A process that begins with careful listening to the hopes and concerns of the Haitian people;
- Mutual empowerment; an awareness of and concern for the interdependence of the Haitian and U.S. economic and political systems;

- Regular communication that involves several persons from both twin communities through e-mail, letters and visits;
- In both communities, a broad awareness of and commitment to the twinning relationship and its objectives;
- A sense of concern for both the material and spiritual well being of those in the twinning relationship;
- Creative projects that provide vehicles for the mutual sharing of gifts;
- Regular visits of members of each twin to the other.

## Process for Establishing a Twinning Relationship

The primary responsibility for establishing a twin rests with the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person.

1. Twinning can begin in several ways:
  - The Diocesan Haiti Staff Person or existing twinned entities identify and approach parishes to consider twinning.
  - A Virginia parish or group expresses interest in twinning to The Diocesan Haiti Staff Person or an already twinned entity.
  - All potential twins are referred to the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person to begin the process.
2. The Diocesan Staff Person visits the parish to discuss the possibilities and explain these guidelines. This involves discussions with the J&P Committee, Pastoral Council, Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator, Parish Staff and some form of presentation for the entire parish.
3. The Pastoral Council and Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator of the parish approve the establishment of a twinning relationship and form a Haiti Committee. A Haiti committee is essential. It is the responsibility of the committee to bring the message of Haiti to the parish and to facilitate the sharing of the relationship between the twinned parishes.
4. The Diocesan Haiti Staff Person reviews Haitian parishes and other groups that have requested a twinning partner and recommends a match, subject to the approval of both parties. Each parish or group will provide a description of themselves for the prospective twinning partners. An exchange of letters can begin. The Virginia Pastor/Pastoral Coordinator writes a letter of introduction to the Pastor in Haiti. Plans may be discussed to visit the Haiti twin.
5. When both entities approve, the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person informs the Bishop who writes a congratulatory letter to the newly twinned parish. An announcement is then sent to the Catholic Virginian. The twinning relationship should be celebrated in an appropriate manner in Virginia and in Haiti.
6. A similar process should be carried out with the Haitian parish or group for Steps 2, 3 and 4.
7. Communication begins. It is recommended that you invite the pastor or leader of the twin to come to visit your parish. And you plan to make a trip to your

parish in Haiti. Also begin email and letter communication. If you do not have a person who speaks Creole and the leader does not speak English find someone who speaks French. Most Haitians speak French and you can begin communication that way.

8. You will be included in the Diocesan Haiti email list and mailing list.
9. You may continue to utilize the Diocesan office and other parishes in the area that have twinning programs for continued support and resourcing.
10. You are not alone. You have a network of support!!
11. In approaching other parishes to twin:
  - a) Raise awareness of the reality of Haiti
  - b) Encourage other parishes to consider a twinning relationship of their own and refer them to the Haiti Twinning Committee.
  - c) Parishes are asked not to act apart from the Haiti Twinning Committee when approaching and speaking to other parishes about twinning.

## Dynamics of Groups Already Twinned

- Co-twinning: Decisions considering co-twinning with another Virginia parish are exceptions to the guidelines and are processed through The Diocesan Haiti Staff Person.
- Changing twins is also an exception to the guidelines and is processed through The Diocesan Haiti Staff Person.
- All fund raising for your Haiti Twin should be limited to your parish, unless approved by the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person.
- All foundations and committees under the Haiti Commission must receive approval from the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person in order to solicit funds from parishes in the Diocese.

All groups or individuals in the diocese planning trips to Haiti must notify the Diocesan Haiti Staff Person. In addition to parish trips and Diocesan Retreat trips, this would include medical trips, college trips, and trips connected with the Haiti Commission's Foundations or Committees.

## Follow up Procedures

- Continue the discernment process with the parish and go through the process of decision making unique to your parish. (ie approval of pastor, parish council, leadership).
- Establish a committee who will be the steering committee for the twinning project for the parish.
- Notify Patrice of decision. She and you will decide together on the twin in Haiti based upon your desires, the needs of the parishes in Haiti, size of parish ect.

- Each partner will write a letter of introduction to each other and send or email.
- The Bishop of Richmond will write a congratulatory and welcoming letter.
- Communication begins. It is recommended that you invite the pastor or leader of the twin to come to visit your parish. And you plan to make a trip to your parish in Haiti. Also begin email and letter communication. If you do not have a person who speaks Creole and the leader does not speak English find someone who speaks French. Most Haitians speak French and you can begin communication that way.
- You will be included in the Diocesan Haiti email list and mailing list.
- You may continue to utilize the Diocesan office and other parishes in the area that have twinning programs for continued support and resourcing.
- Upon deciding to twin you will receive a packet of additional materials including a template for developing a Haiti twinning relationship and policies and procedures. You are not alone. You have a network of support!!

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