

OUTREACH TO HAITI

espwa, our newsletter of hope



H E L P I N G H A I T I A N S H E L P H A I T I A N S

God's Watchful Grace

By Barbara Wysocki

Almost two decades ago when I was asked to join a parish trip to Haiti, I said "Yes." I'll admit, I didn't know what to expect, but as an experienced traveler I knew it wasn't an island vacation. After 11 visits to Haiti, I believe each trip is a revelation and each contributes to my salvation.

Over the years I've seen conservationist Jane Wynne go from battling bulldozers with her body to creating a mountaintop station that protects the watershed for two rivers and teaches children about ecology. I've seen Danielle Panette saving children affected by HIV by creating a home and the medical help to heal them, while making sure they had the education to help them learn to farm at their Maison Arc-en-Ciel/Rainbow House. And I've watched my twin parish, St. Anne in Saintaard, Haiti, build a school that now serves 500+ students in grades K-12. I've seen a unique collaboration with that local fisherman's association to help replace boats lost two years ago when Hurricane Matthew swept away their only means of livelihood. When I visited Haiti this past January, I even saw brand new streets in Port-au-Prince.

I've also seen changes back here

in my parish community. On that first trip by Saint Elizabeth Seton Church in 2000, there were a dozen people including our priest. For a while after we decided to twin with St. Anne Saintaard, the number of parishioners traveling every year remained the same. We sponsored an annual fundraising event called Hoof it for Haiti. Then the pastor was transferred and while we continued to support our Haitian sisters and brothers, fewer people were on-board to help and to go to Haiti.

In 2017, St. Elizabeth Seton Church combined with St. James Church to form the Rocky Hill Roman Catholic parish of St. Josephine Bakhita. It was time to revitalize what we call Our Haitian Promise.

With good support from our pastor, we got started in a variety of ways. A parishioner organized a fundraising concert. We invited Outreach to Haiti Director to speak at all the masses. We acknowledged St. Anne's Feast Day in July with a talk after masses by a parishioner who'd traveled to Haiti. After ten years, we switched to a fundraising letter to cut down on rising overhead costs for our 5K race. Faith Formation classes started and a parish sewing group collected items for our twin St. Anne and six barrels full were sent. The Knights of Columbus contributed funds. In January, Joe Clarizio and I

Boats built after the hurricane, thanks to Outreach, outfitted by US twins.



Barbara Wysocki, Fr. Johnson and Joe Clarizio at twinned parish St. Anne Saintaard, Haiti.

traveled to Haiti and then we shared our experiences at masses.

What will we do next? Another concert is being discussed. One suggestion is a 20th anniversary reunion for our past and current travelers. It's time for a renewed commitment and to encourage more parishioners, and perhaps

a deacon, to sign up for our next trip.

The relationship between St. Josephine Bakhita parish and St. Anne Saintaard is founded on prayer and mutual respect. We'll need both to strengthen those bonds. In doing so we'll all grow with God's watchful grace.

The Practice of Twinning

By Fr. Frank Rouleau

In 1985 the Diocese of Norwich responded to requests of lay people from the Diocese who asked what we, as a Diocese, could do to help the people of Haiti. The Bishop of Norwich, Most Rev Daniel Reilly, and a delegation of lay people went to Haiti to find out. As a result of that visit, we have had a presence in the Port au Prince Archdiocese for over 30 years and our two Dioceses are twinned. The Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti has: Twinning, Education Scholarships, Community Outreach and a Medical Clinic. Our philosophy is Helping

Haitians to Help Haitians.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The Faith is strong in Haiti and 70 percent of the people are Catholic. The Church in Haiti is poor too. Participating in Parish Twinning is the "work of ministry, building up the body of Christ" (St Paul, Ephesians 4:12). We are all members of the one mystical Body of Christ, many parts, with gifts to share for the good of all. One of the greatest gifts that the Catholic people of Haiti can give us is the witness of their Faith, trusting in God, despite all the misery, turmoil and

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The Motive of Twinning: A Biblical Justification

by Richard Higgins, Chairman,
Walk with Haiti,
St. Mark Church, Padre Pio Parish

In "Church in America" (1999), Pope St. John Paul II calls for us to develop "bonds of communication with local churches in other areas of America." It is a call to action.

In 1998 St. Mark Church in Westbrook, Conn., signed a covenant with Notre Dame de Lourdes in the area of Port-au-Prince referred to as Cité Militaire, Haiti. St. Mark established our Walk with Haiti committee. The partnership has been rewarding for both signatories. Through the years we have raised money for

emergency relief, education and multiple capital works. The committee is self-supporting through many fund-raising efforts. We enjoy coming to know our sister church—most years we visit them—and Notre Dame's Father Anicette has come to Connecticut. Like in a good relay race, the faces have changed through the years, but every person involved is a willing partner giving their time, varied talents and treasure. (*Proverbs 22:9 The kindly man will be blessed, for he gives of his sustenance to the poor.*)

The Bible offers a very clear directive about serving others and especially the poor (*Matthew 25:40 I assure you, as often as you did*



Bishop Cote's visit to Haiti. "I believe this ministry is important to our spiritual growth as a diocese."

it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me). Obviously in Haiti the poverty is bad and through no fault of their own, most Haitians live a really tough life. Fortunately we are privileged to have the resources to feed, school or provide comfort to them. Our blessings are obvious to all, except perhaps to ourselves. A trip to Haiti can fix that.

For those at St. Mark who see the value in twinning, our efforts garner a renewed appreciation for our own blessings and a heightened awareness of how to use them to support the Mystical Body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:20,26 There are, indeed, many different members, but one body...if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it*). Twinning is not a one-way street. In Haiti, I'm always struck during the intercessory prayers when they call out "St. Mark Parish" and in full chorus the faithful respond in Creole, "Lord, hear our prayer." This is a key reason for our 20 years of growth. Stories abound showing the Holy Spirit has His hand on the tiller.

Generally, most Haitians are poor, but rich in faith (*Luke 6:20 ...blessed are the poor; the reign of God is yours*). Though we share the same liturgy it's striking how different the atmosphere is in our churches. When Mass starts at our parish twin in Haiti at 7 a.m., the pews are packed tightly; everybody is neatly dressed, reverent and fully engaged, singing with gusto. The offertory collection is a competition between the genders, who form two lines to bring their offering to the altar; most give something, if only a few cents. At the end of Mass the totals and winning gender are announced, everybody cheers! The church is alive. The crowd then moves to the courtyard for fellowship. It's joyful and nobody is in a hurry to leave.

Life is a test and we are blessed to be living in turbulent times, because they provide us a chance to go against the crowd and stand up for Jesus through serving the poor, while also providing an avenue to our salvation (*Proverbs 21:13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor will himself also call and not be heard*). Haiti provides an incredible opportunity for any parish willing to step into the unknown by providing a hand up to our brothers and sisters in Haiti. God is never outdone in generosity. There is a sundial on the wall of Pope St. John Paul II's home church in Wadowice, Poland. It reads, "Time Flies, Eternity waits."

My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, "Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed", but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless.

—James 2: 14-17

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A publication of
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Visiting Peace Cycle, a small business that repurposes plastic bags. Barbara is modeling their messenger bag.

The Faith of Twinning

by Fr Frank Rouleau
Twinning Director and Chaplain,
Haiti

Parish Twinning is about building relationships with Catholic parishes in other places that are not blessed with the resources that we have in the USA. “We are members of a universal Church that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world” (US Council of Catholic Bishops, 1997).

In Parish Twinning the community develops a Christ centered, mission-oriented collaboration with a Parish in Haiti. “A true partnership involves the building and nurturing of a relationship over time, that transcends one act of working together (such as a project), or of sending a series of checks... When the relationship is itself highly valued, it allows for mutual participation and transformation, as all are invited to participate equally, to love, pray and for our faith to be present to one another.” (CRS, *Parish Partnership Manual*) The “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic” faith that is shared by people throughout the world. Jesus’ said “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

“Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbors and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity This duty is not limited to one’s own family, nation or state, but extends to all...so no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family.” St Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, #51

If it is genuine, the personal encounter with the Lord will also bring a renewal of the Church: as sisters and neighbors to each other, will strengthen bonds of cooperation and solidarity. Open to the unity which comes from true communion with the Risen Lord, Churches, and all who belong to them, will discover through their own experience that ‘the encounter with the living Jesus Christ’ is ‘the path to conversion, communion and solidarity’.” St Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia America*, #7

“The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the sacraments (*lei-*



Concelebrating mass is Fr. Frank, Bishop Cote, Fr. Rouge pastor of Christ Roi

turgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being”. Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #25a

All the poor – as Blessed Paul VI loved to say – belong to the Church by “evangelical right” (*Address at the Opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, 29 September 1963), and require of us

a fundamental option on their behalf.

Blessed, therefore, are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes”: they are hands that call down God’s blessing upon their brothers and sisters. Pope Francis, *Message on the First World Day of the Poor*, 13 June 2017



Fr. Frank greets parishioners at twin parish Our Lady of Lourdes, Haiti.

Eight Principals of Solidarity Based Partnerships

- Emphasize Relationships as well as Resources
- Respect Local Church Organization & Planning
- Practice Mutuality & Equality
- Support Responsible Local Leadership
- Promote Transparency & Accountability
- Work to Promote Greater Justice & Peace
- Seek to Give & Receive, Learn & Teach
- Deepen our Faith by Experiencing the Universal Catholic Church (CRS PPM)



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The Practice of Twinning continued from p. 1

poverty in their lives. As the Bishop of Norwich, Most Rev Michael Cote, has stated “we get more out of Haiti spiritually than we put into the country materially”.

By building bridges of faith, we come together in solidarity and communion. Catholics linked together spiritually, culturally and in a mutual sharing of resources in Jesus’ Name. This involves going outside of one’s

comfort zone, crossing over into another culture, into another economic, linguistic and political system. Parish Twinning is truly an outreach to our sisters and brothers who share our faith, to aid the spread of the Gospel in their land.

Parish Twinning starts with a Parish discerning if God is calling them to reach out to help build up the Church beyond the boundaries of the Parish or the

Nation. God has led the Diocese of Norwich to twin with the Archdiocese of Port au Prince, Haiti. There are many poor parishes in the Archdiocese that could use assistance. What a difference help can make!

Diocese of Norwich Outreach to Haiti has parishes twinned

in the Dioceses of Norwich. Is God calling your parish to enter into a faith-filled growth experience? Please speak with your Pastor and investigate the possibilities.

Parish Twinning IS about:

- Growing and sharing faith journeys together in the Lord
- Learning about each other’s service and worship styles
- Building a mutual relationship of solidarity between parishes
- Promoting Social Justice and peace with & for each other
- Developing friendships with people of other cultures/nations

Parish Twinning IS NOT about:

- Changing others, but maybe changing ourselves
- Imposing our way of life, culture
- Only building infrastructure
- Only fundraising

Diocese of Norwich, Outreach to Haiti
 invites you to the

12th Annual Gala

benefiting children in Haiti

Saturday, April 27, 2019

A VILLA LOUISA

60 VILLA LOUISA RD. • BOLTON, CONN.

Cocktails at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner

Outreach to Haiti welcomes guest speaker

MS. YAMILE PEREZ

Outreach to Haiti

Education Sponsorship Program Recipient

\$100 per person (\$50 tax-deductible)

Cocktail attire. RSVP 860-800-3601 by April 16.