

**Update since earthquake in Haiti
on Tuesday, January 12, 2010**

Gracious God, we commend to your loving care all who suffer, especially the people of Haiti. Give them patience and hope in their distress; strengthen and uphold them in mind and body; and grant, by your intervention, that all your people may be made whole according to your desire, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Since the earthquake struck Haiti on Tuesday of last week, we heard the voice of our priest friend, the Rev. Jean-Berthol Phanord, for the first time this Tuesday morning. In his report to us we sadly learned that some members of the mother mission church - St. Matthieu – lost their lives in the earthquake. Thankfully, however, the majority of them survived. Thankfully, as well, the majority of the members of the daughter mission churches and priest stations survived: St. Jean Baptiste, St. Marguerite, St. Bartholomew, St. Thomas, St. Jacques, and St. Paul. On behalf of the people of St. Matthieu and her missions, Jean-Berthol+ expressed deep gratitude to you all, the people of Holy Innocents' for our prayers and support.

At this point, little is known about the students of the schools at St. Matthieu, St. Jean Baptiste, and St. Marguerite because the schools had ended the day by the time the earthquake struck little after 4 pm.

Of the structures at St. Matthieu, both the church building as well as the school complex are standing, but damaged to such a degree that they may not be salvageable. According to Jean-Berthol, the church and the school buildings at St. Jean Baptiste are no more. At St. Marguerite, the case is the same. In Jean Berthol's own words, "Everything is gone."

At St. Matthieu, people are living out on the streets under open air as elsewhere in Haiti. According to Jean-Berthol, they have no water but have had some soft drinks and bottled fruit punch available to them. There is scarcity of food. As of yesterday morning, no aid has arrived from Port-au-Prince.

Leogane: St. Matthieu is located just outside the city of Leogane ca. 19 miles west from Port-au-Prince. It is at the Residence Filariose [RF] in Leogane where Holy Innocents' pilgrims have stayed during our trips to Haiti. The RF compound is located on a large area of gated grassland shared with the School of Nursing Science - the Episcopal University of Haiti [FSIL]. RF and the one-story building complex of the nursing school are among the very few buildings in Leogane that withstood the earthquake without extensive damage. Between 80 – 90% of houses in Leogane were destroyed according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA]. Deaths were extensive in numbers as were the injuries. It is on the grounds outside RF and the nursing school where the injured are being attended to. Since Holy Cross Hospital in Leogane has been next to non-operational for over 2 ½ years due to lack of funding, there was little of medical supplies and medicine available right after the earthquake and very few doctors available.

Leogane was isolated from the world until Sunday afternoon when the first shipment of medical supplies along with three doctors arrived. This was a private charter plane from the US which landed on the highway outside Leogane. Two more private planes from the US arrived yesterday with additional supplies and doctors. On Sunday, the first disaster/ rubble rescue team arrived from Port-au-Prince, but they were too late to save anyone. The rescue team was called back to Port-au-Prince on Sunday night.

The Episcopal Diocese of Haiti: As noted by our Rector on Sunday, Michael+ made the point that the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti has the largest membership of any diocese in the Episcopal Church USA. The office of its bishop and home is at the Holy Trinity Cathedral complex in Port-au-Prince. The entire Holy Trinity complex is gone, including the cathedral itself, the office and home of the bishop, and the Cathedral School of Holy Trinity whose wonderful boys choir – *Les Petits Chanteurs* – graced us with its presence and beautiful voices in September of 2008. We do not have reports of fatalities at the Cathedral School. Thankfully, the school day had ended by the time the earthquake struck. The Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Jean Zaché Duracin, survived the earthquake as did his wife who was injured. Bishop Duracin rejected offers to be evacuated from Haiti. In response to the offer, the Bishop's response was, "No, I will stay with my people." At present, Bishop Duracin is living and serving in a tent city in downtown Port-au-Prince with 3,000 fellow Haitian survivors.

To date, Holy Innocents' has received financial contributions of \$ 17,653 for emergency relief for Haiti. As before, thank you so much for your generous hearts. These funds were transferred to the Episcopal Relief and Development [ERD] yesterday morning. Additional funds, which we welcome in the days ahead, will be sent immediately upon receipt to ERD.

We know and trust that our Risen Lord will guide our partnership with St. Matthieu into the future. There is much to be done. Right now, the best we can do is to continue to pray for our sisters and brothers in Haiti, and for us. And, of course, to give financially what we can to support rescue efforts in Haiti.

Our relief efforts have been coordinated throughout the Parish of Holy Innocents' at every step of this process. The Church and the School, through Michael+ and Kirk, are making this effort a top priority through the Office of Reconciliation, Mission, and Outreach at the Church and the Office of the Head Chaplain at the School. The cooperation has been impressive.

In the coming months and as we move forward with our partnership with St. Matthieu and her missions through the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti, there will be two options for giving. The first and immediate one is ERD. In an email message yesterday, Bishop Duracin asked that funds continue to be directed to the ERD relief for Haiti until such time as the Haitian banking system can be restored. Bishop Duracin is and has been in conversation with the ERD, his priests, and the diocesan executive council to assess the most urgent needs. The second and longer-range option is our Parish Lenten Starfish Project through which, as in the past, funds will be used for future support of St. Matthieu's missions. There will be reconstruction costs for church and school, and there will be costs to restore water purification and the food program for students. God knows, there is plenty for us to do.

In the midst of deep sorrow, it is a blessing that we have been granted the resources to become the instruments of loving support to our sisters and brothers who so deeply suffer. For them we are the resource providing material from where a reality of destitute is transformed into a reality of restoration; a reality where all the difference in the world is transformed in the wellspring of the Water of Life, which is our Living Christ Jesus.

As always, peace and grace to you,

Tryggvi+