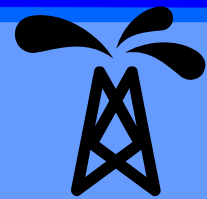




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JANUARY 2010



A Cup of Water

Spring 2010 Newsletter

This newsletter coincides with the feast of St. Bridget of Ireland which occurs every year on February 1st. When we study the life of St. Bridget (or Bridgid or Bridgette as it is sometimes spelled), we find a humble but determined soul who overcame many difficulties and obstacles to follow Christ. She was constantly trying to help people and heal the sick. Little wonder that it was through her intercession that St. Bridget Parishioners found themselves called to “go do” what they could for some forgotten souls in Haiti.

It has been ten years since a small team from St. Bridget Catholic Church in Schriever, Louisiana was inspired to go to Haiti to do what people from South Louisiana do when people are in trouble. They roll up their sleeves, begin cooking gumbo and go to work. When we arrived we found people of a different color but with our same last names and much of our same cultural customs, but who were desperately poor and in a real mess ----no water, pitiful housing, no schools, no food - no nothing - but tremendously spirit-filled and confident that God was going to help them. We found people that the world had forgotten and who, although had nothing to work with, did have a tremendous willingness to work.

This is where we began the remarkable journey. As we worked we shared the story. The people of St. Bridget Parish continued to faithfully go down year after year to do what we could to lend a hand by giving of our time, talent and treasure. As we went, God would inspire others to contact us. More and more came and pitched in. Today the communities in which we work are thriving because of St. Bridget’s intercession. The faithfulness of the community of St. Bridget in Schriever, along with all the friends and associates who have joined us in this adventure that we now call Haiti Mission, Inc, has changed the lives of many in Haiti.

The three schools that have been started – St. Bridget Numero Deux, St. Bridget Ravine Sable and St. Bridget Kay en Rond – are educating at least 750 children who never would have been able to attend school. The funding raised every month to pay 24 teachers, to buy food and distribute it to the children at least once a month and to furnish water to the schools and surrounding communities has been an incredible blessing and an economic boon. On behalf of all those children and families that have been helped, we say a heartfelt thank you to all. We say thank you especially to St. Bridget, our powerful patroness who has inspired and encouraged us to bring help and healing love to people in our community in Schriever and to people in need throughout the world.

Current Happenings

As you can imagine, we have lots of things happening right now. The newsletter had been written and was ready to be mailed when the January 12th horror happened. Since we have been sending out regular updates via mail and email, I thought we would go ahead and send you part of the newsletter that still reflects what we have done and what we are planning to do. Normalcy and security are key aspects of recovery. The more things can return to a routine for the families and children the sooner they will be able to continue their education and resume their work towards social and economic development. With these goals in mind, thus our decision to send you “the regular newsletter” as part of this mail out. You can see how well the schools and families of the communities have been doing. You can also read the wonderful statements on the part of some of the families as to how they have been affected for the better by our intervening in their lives with loving, helping hands. Now the needs will be so much greater, but with the grace of God and your help, we will stand hand-in-hand and shoulder-to-shoulder with this people of perpetual hope – the people of Haiti.

FYI:

We have lots of things happening right now. One of the most notable is that we have worked out an arrangement with another church group working in Haiti to help them drill water wells in another part of Haiti. Our vision has always been to somehow duplicate and multiply our efforts to bring water to more people. We were approached by this group and after some time of discussing with them and working with them, it was decided that they were serious and capable of drilling wells with the type equipment that we use. We worked out an equitable and fair price for both of us. They could purchase our equipment and we in turn would be able to purchase another piece of equipment that would be more efficient and effective in the mountainous areas in which we will have to drill future wells. We are delighted to have been able to work this out so that potentially, many more Haitians will have access to clean, potable drinking water. Please keep this initiative in your prayers since we still have some details to work out, not the least of which is shipping a new piece of equipment to Jeremie from Ohio. We’ll keep you posted.

Golf Tournament

Included in this mailing is a flyer regarding the Golf Tournament on March 19th, which had been planned prior to the January 12th earthquake. This event also takes on an entirely different dimension now than we could ever have imagined. If you are a golfer, come out and play. It is a great course and will be a great day. If you are not a golfer, please pass it on to someone you know who might want to play or may want to be a sponsor. Most especially, try to come out with us on that day as we pay our respects to those that died in the tragedy and raise funds to help those who have survived.

Annual Report 2009 – 2010 - “ECOLE SAINTE BRIGITTE”

At least once a year we try to send a school report out to our friends and supporters. This year, I asked Fr. Joe, the superintendent of schools for the diocese of Jeremie and the director of the St. Bridget School system in the villages, to write the report. For those of you who know and have met Fr. Joe, you know how busy he is, wearing so many hats and having so many responsibilities. Because of this, I hesitated to ask him, but when I did, as usual he graciously went to work and sent us the following beautiful “state of the schools” report.

Thanks to Haiti Mission and its benefactors, we have been blessed to begin this school year in a new, “scare-free” (free of danger and bullying) facility, in spacious buildings with regular classrooms at all three locations - Numero Deux, Kay an Ron and Ravine-Sable. Though much is still needed to be done in order to reach a normal school environment, tremendous strides have been made this past year.

Combined enrollment at all three schools is a total of 750 children - 404 girls and 346 boys. According to a single mother whose child attends the St. Bridget Numero Deux school, the school is an extraordinary relief for her and the numerous women in her situation. She says that even though she has no possible way of finding the funds to send her child to school, she believes that God will continue to listen to her prayer that the school can find the necessary funds to continue its work in the community.

A father of children who attend the schools tells us: “I am so grateful to you Father and to “tout blan kap ede-w yo” (and all the Americans of Haiti Mission that help you). Because, without the school in Ravine Sable, my children would never be able to attend school, since my financial situation would not allow me to do so. Now, I feel like they are equal to any other child in the world and have a chance for a better life. Mesi anpil se pou Bondye kontinue beni-w ak tout zanmy-w yo! (Thank you so much and may God continue to bless you and your friends from Louisiana).

A young boy from Nan Champay (Ortega Joseph) who is an orphan (both parents have died) came recently during a pelting rain to thank me and Haiti Mission for giving him the chance of his life to attend school. He is raised by his grandmother who is very poor. Now, Ortega has successfully completed grammar school and is at our middle school in Numero Deux. He ranked 3rd in his class after the Christmas exam session.

In all three locations, the parents are so far very satisfied with the discipline and education provided by the Sainte Brigitte schools. They have more confidence in our school than in that of the schools sparsely provided by the government. In short, the villagers are very happy with “Ecole Sainte Brigitte” which brings more hope to the parish community and a sure sign of its progress toward a brighter future.

Some aspects to consider: We still have to improve the quality of our education by engaging qualified teachers. We also need to work on the completion of the construction and acquire adequate school materials and supplies but especially chairs (or benches) and tables, filing cabinets etc., for the children and the teachers. For proper hygiene purposes, we need to address the problem of still not having toilets or latrines for the two new school buildings in Numero Deux and Kay an Ron. We know God will show us a way. Be assured that your kindness and continued support is changing and saving the lives of many.

May the gracious and loving Father of all, help us to continue to fulfill the mission He has entrusted to us - to always be a sign of great hope for those in need.

Fr. Joe

As you can see, our schools are making a tremendous impact on the communities in which we work which provides a ripple effect throughout the region. Thank you so much for your continued support and encouragement. Pray that we reach our goal of completing the school construction this year and most importantly to finally have basic hygiene and toilet facilities in place for the children.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Spring Trip

Our Spring trip has now taken on an entirely different focus. The deadly earthquake on the fateful day of January 12th has changed everything as we once knew in our beloved Haiti. We have more interest than ever on the part of people who are wanting to journey with us, but we still have so many unanswered questions. The first group going down will mostly be people who have experience with the challenges sometimes faced on trips to Haiti. We are all so anxious to go to be with our friends and families, but we have to wait for clearance from the various authorities who are striving to bring about order and control of the situation. The response from so many of you who will never come to Haiti has been absolutely amazingly supportive of our work and Fr. Joe’s struggle to help the many in need at this time. Know that we could never do what we are doing without your sacred and precious gifts that allow us to bless others by sending immediate direct aid to the refugees flooding into the Jeremie area. All of our current financial information is up on our website. Our books are always open to any queries, as we try to be as responsible and transparent as possible. Please know that we never take a single penny of your kindness for granted and we do everything humanly possible to utilize your gifts in the most efficient and effective way possible. God Bless you all! We could not do it without you!!

Faie’s Up-to-Date Facts

Many of you have asked how this devastation has affected our villages. Fr. Joe’s survey of his area resulted in finding 250 villagers died in PAP, 250 are still missing, 19 houses are severely damaged or destroyed, and approximately 5000 refugees now in the Jeremie area with more coming in daily. Enor Rodrigue’s (our liaison director in Port-Au-Prince) family is safe (except that his 8-year-old son Emerson saw two of his schoolmates die near him). Our monies received so far have been sent to Fr. Joe to purchase supplies for the refugees flooding into the villages near Jeremie, to repair the Matthew 25 house in PAP that’s being used as a temporary hospital & haven for rescue workers, to purchase rice and beans shipped by Friend Ships out of Lake Charles, to help Enor’s family and friends, and to buy medical supplies for a Haitian physician in N.O.- Dr. Rene Charles and a medical group from New Jersey, who went to Haiti last week. **Special fundraiser** for our Haiti Mission: “Painting for Haiti” sponsored by Corks n Canvas (a wine and painting party) on Sunday, Feb. 28 in Metairie, New Orleans, Baton Rouge & Mandeville, 985-626-6272. See our website for more details.