



St. John's Haitian Apostolate

January 2016

Building our relationship

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Our next parish trip to the BLB Orphanage in Grand Goave, Haiti is scheduled for Saturday, July 23 – 30. As Sophie's reflection in this newsletter shows, it usually proves to be a life changing experience for those who make the trip. If you are interested in joining us on this year's pilgrimage, please contact me. You can call the rectory (508-756-7165) or email me at frjohnmadden@gmail.com. I am happy to speak to you about my own experience of Haiti. As well as provide information about the registration process.

This week we commemorate the 6th anniversary of the horrible earthquake and the tragic death of our dear, Britney. The horror remains fresh, the loss of such a fabulous young woman still a tragedy. And yet...new life continues to rise up from the death and 66 children thrive because Len and Cherylann, Bernie and Richie and the ever growing BLB family "continues the compassion" that brought Britney to Haiti...and brings us.

In Christ's Peace,
Fr. John Madden



Our Child, Darwens

As a parish, we continue to be a full sponsor for Darwens, who just turned 7 earlier this week! As BLB staff post updates of Darwens on the St. John's Facebook page, everyone is welcome to enjoy heartwarming photos of this very special young man throughout the year.



St. John's Travels to Haiti

Last May, our parish sent its second group to Grand Goave, Haiti. There were seven of us from St. John's and five other "Britsionaries" who stayed at the orphanage, helped with building projects, visited the St. Françoise parish and experienced Haiti. The following is a reflection written by parishioner, Sophie Kozaczka.

Having lived 60 years, my children grown with families of their own, I wanted to give of myself to others while I was still healthy and able. Last year, an opportunity presented itself in the form of a parish trip to Haiti. The two-hour ride to the orphanage from the airport opened my eyes to true poverty. People with no shoes; tents used

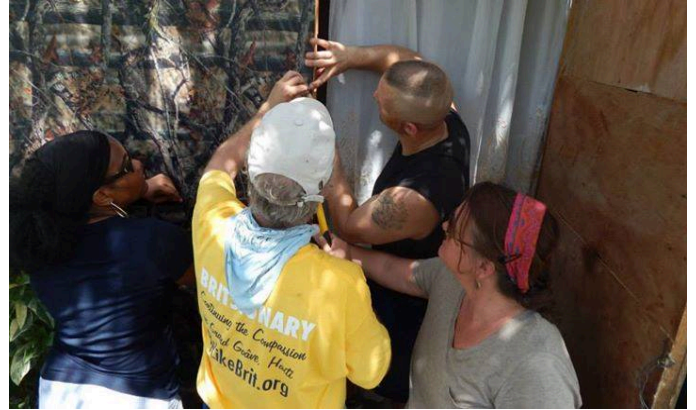
as shelter; garbage and rubble from the earthquake still present everywhere.

We drove past local buses that overflowed with people, their possessions, and even live chickens and goats. I couldn't imagine how hot it was riding on these buses with the temperature 90 degrees plus. Finally we neared the orphanage, which sits at the top of a steep mountain. The road was wide and paved. On each side, there were small tarp-covered houses. Most were no larger than a typical shed, about 10 feet by 10 feet. A large gate was rolled away for our caravan to enter the orphanage walls. As we entered the building courtyard, the children sang and ran to hug everyone. They wanted to play and be held.

After our warm greeting by the children, we were shown to our rooms. They were very basic accommodations with two bunk beds and a private bath. We even had air conditioning in the evening so there was no problem sleeping on the hot nights. The orphanage is well maintained. The grounds and building are spotless. There are 66 children of various ages from 4 to 16. The children have caregivers around the clock. The meals are nutritious.

Our day started at 8 a.m. each morning. We walked to the job site and carried our tools. During the week, we poured cement floors for three homes. The cement was mixed at the bottom of the hill and we carried buckets, brigade-style, to each house. There is no electricity or running water at the homes. The meals are cooked outside and water is carried down the mountain daily. The toilet is a hole in the ground with a cloth hung from branches for privacy.

After our morning work, each day we took short excursions to visit the St. Francoise parish school in the village and a small mission church up in the mountains. It was very remote. The road was so narrow only one vehicle can pass at a time. The church has been partially destroyed by the earthquake, and only the roof and three walls remain. A few curious children, with no shoes, came to see our group. During the trip, I saw with my own eyes where the money St. John's has pledged to the St. Francoise parish is used.



One day as a treat, we went to the ocean for a swim. The blue water was very salty and very clean. A young man wanted to give rides in a canoe he had carved out of a tree log, but no one took the offer. An older woman and a young girl, who was blind and appeared to have Down syndrome came by to sell nuts. We learned that in Haiti, the blind hold the shoulder of a seeing person in order to get around.

On our last day, we went to the market to buy provisions for each of the five families we had helped. The market area was open, with tarps for shade. One woman sold fresh meat, flies buzzing and skin-and-bone dogs scavenging for scraps on the floor. It was while I was at the market that I saw a young girl, about 10 years of age, with a balloon-size hernia bulging from her stomach. In America she would have been easily treated. It is so sad how some children must live.

Our time in Haiti went by quickly. We had made a small difference in the lives of a few people on this island. The time in Haiti, however, had made a big impact on my perception of human need. Every time I open my faucet, I am grateful. Every time I take a shower, I am grateful. How fortunate I am to have all my human needs met, and then some. We can make a difference in the lives of people in a different country by giving of our excess.

Yes, we all have excess in America. We have closets for all our clothes and shoes. The people I encountered didn't have more than one or two dresses. Some of the children didn't have any clothes or shoes. It is my New Year's resolution to give of my excess, whether I give up a cup of coffee or another pair of shoes or a manicure. Because of this trip, I now want to use my excess to help other human beings get through life with less difficulty.