



St. John's Haitian

September 2016

Building a Relationship

Dear Friends in the Lord,

As Emerson and Charlie point out in this newsletter, our annual trip to Grand Goave, Haiti is an extraordinary experience. It is all about the children, of course, and their growth is a testament to the BLB staff and to the goodness of God.

Our growing relationship with Fr. Brice, the pastor, and the people of St. Francoise has been important, too. The work that they do is heroic. The new church, as we have seen in past years, is beautiful. This year, Fr. Brice took us up two different mountains to see two of the Mission churches. Those of us on the trip last year could not believe what we saw! One of the missions which was more rubble than building last year is now a spacious gathering place for worship and education. Fr. Brice is most grateful for our monthly support and has put it to great use in building the Kingdom here on earth.

In Christ's Peace, Fr. John Madden

Our Child, Darwens

Darwens will enroll into the 2nd grade class at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School this year. Darwens is a bit of a spit-fire: he has an extremely endearing personality, but is full of mischief (the good kind)! He's an inquisitive, outgoing, and extroverted person in every sense of the word. While he can be a bit of a handful at times, Darwens responds so well to one-on-one attention, and thrives when he is working next to an adult. He's recently taken to working alongside some of our day laborers in a rock pile (of his own choosing) and loves to get dirty while working hard.



He is a very proud boy. He has an infectious laugh that brings joy to everyone within earshot of it. His favorite subject in school is art class – he loves to draw and show off his work! He's also quite an adept soccer player.

While Darwens is an only child (without biological siblings at BLB or elsewhere) he did enroll at the same time as another boy of his age, Dotchley, The two were living in the same area of one of the worst slums in all of Haiti, and arguably one of the most dangerous places in the world (the United Nations once referred to Cite Soleil (Sun City) as the most dangerous place on the planet). The two of them are inseparable to this day, and we love that they've maintained that brotherly bond.



St. John's Travels to Haiti...again!

In July, our parish sent its third group to the BLB orphanage. The following are reflections shared by two of our Britsionaries, Charles and Emerson.

By Emerson Sherbourne

My trip to Haiti was a completely life-changing experience. That sounds cliché, but that is really the most accurate way to describe its impact. While I was there, each member was asked to come up with two words to describe Haiti. My first word, given on Sunday night, was "appreciative". I used this after having been there for slightly over a day. I had only been to a Mass and the park with the children, but I already had witnessed how appreciative the people of Haiti could be. One of the most powerful moments of the trip happened after the Mass. An elderly woman, frail and with missing teeth, came over to where my family had been sitting and kissed each of our hands and said "God bless you." This small act of gratitude is what caused me to describe Haiti as appreciative.

By the end of the week, we all had to use different words to describe Haiti. This time, my word was "indescribable." There simply was no word in my vocabulary that could encompass the intense emotions and scenes I'd experienced over the week. The children at BLB were the most fun-loving, happy children I'd ever seen. They would laugh, dance, and play with no reserve. They love without holding back. I cannot describe the intensity of happiness I felt the first time we had a dance party and the children danced, sang, and ran around to the music. It was such a simple, carefree time that I remember vividly and brings a smile to my face even now. I cannot wait to go back to Haiti. 😊

By Charles DuBois

Many people ask me what we do for a whole week in Haiti. We spend time with the 67 children who live at the BLB home, explore the countryside, visit Grand Goave, and build a house. There is time to play volleyball, soccer, basketball and musical chairs with the children. In the evenings we enjoy dance parties, celebrate birthdays, watch movies, and read with the children. At times we join in music and spiritual songs. The children sing in chorus of what angels might sound like – especially the Alleluia hymn.

Our mornings are mostly at the work site building a wooden structure that we would call a shed. The female owner worked with us carrying buckets of water and gravel. Once we finished, she had a concrete floor instead of dirt, a tin roof that would keep her belongings dry in the rain, a door with a lock instead of a piece of canvas, a goat, a charcoal cooking stove, and a bed. This was the first bed for her and her husband after 20 years of marriage. At the dedication Father Madden shared a heartfelt blessing and the couple gave appreciative hugs with tears of gratitude, which emotionally affected each member of our team.

The excursions, hikes and beautiful views of Haiti, the most mountainous country in the Caribbean will be embedded in our memories forever. To think that on January 12, 2010, more than 300,000 people, including our beloved Brittany, perished as a result of an earthquake. Now I see the growth and hope in their eyes is incredible. By our standards, they are the poorest of the poor. And yet, they are thankful simply to have clean, water provided by BLB. As of today, 54 Haitian families have homes built by volunteer teams like ours.

One of the highlights of this trip was the opportunity to attend Mass at St. Francois. The old church was destroyed during the 2010 earthquake and replaced with a new, beautiful, bright place of worship. On this hot July day, the church was packed with parishioners dressed in their Sunday best, just as we would for a wedding. They sang, clapped and without reservation took our hands to share in the Lord's Prayer. The positive energy that morning felt like a pulse sent through my hands to my heart. There was a strong sense of spirituality filled with hope.

Hopefully others will be inspired to answer the call to continue God's work caring for his children in Haiti. ☺