

LAVOUTTE, HAITI Mission

Good Morning! I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you about the Water for Blessings Mission my husband, Nick, and I participated in recently. We joined our Holy Trinity Family, Bishop Kurtz, Deacon Pat and his wife, Janet, Tom Doran, Gina Recard and Julie Harrison on our first mission to Lavoute.

After hearing of some of the challenges faced in previous missions, I didn't know what to expect. I must say, we were truly blessed. There was no heavy rain to cause the truck to get stuck ascending the mountain. In fact, we only had one flat tire the entire trip. Being February instead of June, the temperature was humid but pleasant. Also there were no mosquitos, one of my biggest nightmares. The Lord gave us a great start.

Due to our plane being delayed we missed our connection and lost a day of the mission, though. Therefore, we doubled up on training. As you probably know, we brought 45 water filters. With each trainee signing a contract to assist three other families, we reached 135 families. It was so touching to see the appreciation and thankfulness of the recipients. After the welcome, women stood up thanking us for the clean water. In fact, during one training four women just stood up and walked over to give us a hug. An experience I had was actually feeling the Holy Spirit within one woman. Her eyes were bright and loving. I didn't want to end the embrace.

On Thursday, Deacon Pat and Gina left for the dental clinic in Boudain. We had a double training that day. Since Thursday is market day some of the women left the training to go to the market. I was told if they didn't get what they needed at that time, it would not be available later in the day. We waited for the womens' return before beginning the training. The market was stall after stall, very crowded, with people just selling whatever they brought for the day. I wondered what they did with the food they didn't sell. Our interpreter said they bring what's left to another market which might be a couple of days later. I wondered about refrigeration and the freshness of the food.

Each woman also received a rosary which you kindly donated. Bishop Kurtz blessed each woman and rosary individually. Holy Trinity collected about 400 rosaries, chaplets and crosses. Thank you for your kind donations.

The first boy I met in Lavoute sat next to me and lifted his shoe to show me the tear. I know he was asking for shoes. We had a cheat sheet with a few phrases in Creole. I told him "Mwen pa konprann" (mway pah Kone PWAN) "I don't understand." I also frequently said, "Mwen pa kap pale Kreyol (mway pah kahp PAH-lay Kway-OHL), "I can't speak Kreyol."

I learned children cannot go to school in Haiti without shoes or a uniform. I felt so bad.

The community was happy to see us as was told by their smiles and waves. Even though we didn't share the same language, we communicated by simple words and gestures! The streets looked like a dump truck went by with its back open and dropping boulders, rocks, etc. down.

They were so uneven I assume because of the earthquake. Yet these children were playing soccer on this uneven land.

The Haitians showed such self- respect by their cleanliness and pressed clothes. We visited two homes and were invited into each one as is their custom. It was dark and our flashlights and headlamps weren't sufficient to continue visiting homes.

As you know, there was no running water nor electricity. The rectory at our sister parish, Notre Dame de Lourdes was operated on solar. They had a small cooler for drinks but stopped using it because of the lack of sunlight. The cooler pulled too much solar power which was needed for something else. Water was scarce and used sparingly. There was a container, abt. 32 gal , in a hallway. It was filled pot by pot by the water boy who carried the water up from the sistrern. I experienced humility due to the lack of running water. I know we take so much for granted.

The women lovingly took care of us. They would sit outside and shell beans and grains. Wash their clothes in a pan and hang them to dry. Everyone worked all day long.

I looked at some of my experiences more as an inconvenience than a sacrifice because I knew it was short term. For the Haitians, living with so little every day of their lives is the sacrifice. To be around such strong faith, touched my heart. They are so happy to not be forgotten. We were at an altitude where few missions go and if they do, don't return again. Just think for a moment, "What would it be like to wonder if anyone knew you existed?" The Haitians ask not to be forgotten. Let us not forget them.

Remember the words our Lord spoke, "What you do for the least of our brethren, you do for ME!" Please support next week's Haiti weekend and continue your support for the repairs of our twin sister parish, the "Water for Blessings" mission and our dental clinic. Thank you.

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