

MACHE ANSANM - TO WALK TOGETHER

2008 Annual Report of the Haiti Outreach Ministry

Immaculate Conception (IC) Cathedral Parish

2008 was a challenging year around the world. It began with continued escalation of record oil prices that contributed to high commodity costs (in Haiti these translated into shortages in such daily staples as rice). Then in the fourth quarter the financial crisis emerged and precipitated the present global recession. These events have been devastating to families in the US and to our brothers and sisters in Layaye that had to additionally contend with two hurricane hits. But just as we in the US are showing our resilience, our friends in Layaye remind us all of how bountiful things are when we walk together in the shadow of God's love.

By means of this annual report, members of the Haiti Outreach Ministry would like to highlight ministry activities and accomplishments of calendar year 2008 and bring members of the Cathedral parish up-to-date regarding projects, finances and future goals.

FINANCE

For more than four years, the monthly "Haiti Sunday" collections have provided a baseline level of financial support for the ministry. In 2008, Haiti Sunday collections averaged \$2,600 per month – down \$300 per month from 2007. In addition to that income our fundraising efforts, including Breaking Bread for Haiti, held in January to coincide with the feast day of our sister parish's patron saint, parishioner sponsored tuition of elementary, high school and college students from Layaye, as well as, efforts of our IC school children, youth groups and, gifts at-large, resulted in a total of \$56,975 in ministry contributions for 2008.

In 2008 we provided the parish and members of Notre Dame D'Altagrâce direct support totaling \$68,560:

\$24,000	Monthly support for teacher salaries and administration, including chapel schools
\$13,560	Tuition and school supplies for Layaye elementary, high school, & college students
\$ 6,000	Purchase of new Toyota Helix
\$ 4,000	Medical supplies
<u>\$21,000</u>	Construction and supplying of new Layaye professional school
\$68,560	

2008 HIGHLIGHTS

- The ministry made two visits to Layaye in 2008. During each visit we assisted with the distribution of deworming medicines and vitamins to approximately 1,000 children. Additionally, we continued to monitor the clean water project and the schools. The ministry produced and distributed a DVD showing a typical ministry visitation trip entitled, ***Journey to Layaye***. It provides an excellent opportunity to learn exactly how IC parishioners are improving people's lives, quite literally saving many. There are DVDs still available at the IC parish office free of charge to all that are interested.
- IC is building a professional trade school in Layaye. The school is presently under construction with the hope of beginning operations in the fall of 2009. The simple trades to be taught such as sewing, cooking, craftsmanship, etc. will give the citizens of Layaye an opportunity to make things that can be sold at the markets in Hinche and elsewhere. It will allow them to earn money to supplement the subsistence farming on which they presently live.
- IC bought a new Toyota Helix for the Layaye parish that is scheduled to arrive in April 2009. Presently, when a citizen of Layaye is sick and needs to go to the hospital in Hinche, people must carry that person ten miles, over many hills on an old steel bed frame. Now sick people can ride in a four wheel drive truck. The ministry was required to pay \$6,000 and the Adveniat organization out of Germany paid the remainder for the vehicle.

- In December Father Ilric made a visit to IC in Memphis and did an outstanding job of giving four homilies in English. If you were able to attend one you were no doubt impressed by the profound sense of gratitude that he conveyed on behalf of the people of Layaye. Many IC parishioners took the opportunity to host him as a house and/or dinner guest. It was a wonderful opportunity to visit with a remarkable man who has dedicated his life to helping the poor.

ONGOING AND FUTURE PROJECTS

• **Financial support for schools in Layaye.** If you have viewed *Journey to Layaye* you may have noticed that about one-half of the seats at the Layaye school were empty – **this is unacceptable and must change. History is clear – the first step in any society’s economic development is education.** Educational support in Layaye is a critical part of the ministry. There is no public education system in Haiti and most families cannot afford the annual tuition costs (\$50 for elementary students and \$150 for high school). Most village chapel schools are simple open-air structures and are devoid of books and other basic supplies.

In an effort to double our tuition support, we will have a formal fund raising event planned to coincide with the beginning of IC’s 2009-2010 school year. It will be dedicated to the educational needs of Notre Dame D’Altagrâce’s and surrounding chapels’ school children.

• **Provision of portable water treatment kits.** The provision of clean water to our sisters and brothers in Layaye and the surrounding villages is an essential step in helping them improve their health and overall economic situation. We plan to continue to work with Gift of Water, a non-profit organization that has long worked in Haiti, to provide at least 900 families per year with portable low maintenance water filtration units.

• **Worm treatment program.** Soil-transmitted helminthic infections (hookworms, whipworms and roundworms) are a major source of morbidity in children in many rural areas throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, including Haiti. As a component of our visits to Layaye, we will continue a deworming program on a twice yearly basis. We are able to provide effective treatment against these parasitic worms that are a major contributing factor to anemia and malnutrition in the children of Haiti.

• **Medical nursing support.** We now support a nurse to provide basic health care services to the people of Layaye. We supply her with medicines and now have a dispensary at the rectory in Layaye. As our ministry develops, we hope to be able to organize one or two medical trips to Layaye each year. Therefore, if you or someone you know has medical, dental, or nursing skills, please contact us if you or they would be interested in joining this effort.

MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

Presently, the ministry is chaired by Kelly Fish, Joyce Firenza is secretary. Debra Bartelli, Robert Lorsbach, Lou Ellen McElmurry, Susan Yates, Jared Powelson and Shatara Robertson serve as at-large members of the executive committee. Lois Chamblin coordinates our annual fundraising event, Breaking Bread for Haiti.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

In 2009 we will again have two visitation teams journey to Layaye. The first will be in early June and will be led by Debra Bartelli and Robert Lorsbach. Along with the standard deworming and clean water project efforts they will assess opportunities to help with housing that was destroyed in the hurricanes. Additionally, they will monitor the progress of the new professional school. This will be a wonderful opportunity for spiritual growth, please consider joining them and traveling to Layaye.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Haiti Outreach Ministry, please come to one of our meetings (announced in the bulletin), pick-up a copy of *Journey to Layaye* at the rectory office, call Debra Bartelli (725-1334) or Kelly Fish (274-0234) or, e-mail kfish@astate.edu, to get on the e-mail distribution list.

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'
(Matthew 25:40)