

Fall 2009

Haiti Outreach Newsletter

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Memphis, TN

We now are providing our members and supporters with periodic updates so that everybody can stay abreast of our church's work in Layaye, Haiti. Please take time to read details about the following stories:

- New Trade School dedicated
- New Truck Finally Arrives
- 2009-10 Tuition Drive Underway
- Upcoming trips to Layaye

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, October 28th, from 6-7 PM in the rectory dining room. A reminder will follow.

New Trade School Dedicated

by Debra
Bartelli



Over the years, I've learned that Haitians are a patient but determined people. In October 2004, when I made my first visit to our sister parish in Layaye, the members of the Notre Dame d'Altagrâce Pastoral Council were asked how the people of Immaculate Conception could help them. Their list of needs included clean water, electricity and support for education. Over the years, our parish has done an extraordinary job of responding to each of these needs and then some. However, when the people of Layaye said they needed assistance with education, they were not just talking about traditional primary and secondary school. They wanted to build a professional school where local young adults could learn a trade and find a way to a better life.

With each return visit, members of IC's Haiti Outreach Ministry were greeted with warm welcomes and tremendous gratitude. But invariably, the question was posed, "What about the trade school?" It wasn't until the three-room, red and white school was officially opened on July 12th of this year that I realized just how much this school meant to the people of Layaye. Hundreds of villagers came for the opening ceremony. Students had clearly worked for weeks to clean and decorate the building; they had prepared songs and skits as entertainment for the event. But it was the words of the Pastoral Council president that impressed me the most. He first recounted and gave thanks for the many blessings (medicine, eye clinics, clean water, a generator, support for teachers and tuition for students) that had come to the people of Layaye through the generosity of IC parishioners. But he said none of these equaled the opening of the trade school. He called it a "visible sign" of our support and commitment and said it brought hope to all the young people of the parish. More than 50 students had already enrolled in classes that were scheduled to begin in September.

Although the dedication of the professional school was the highlight of my most recent trip to Layaye, it was not the only thing that made this such a significant visit. Through contributions made by members of our parish, we were able to begin building new homes for families that had lost everything in the hurricanes of 2008. To support our medical efforts we hired and trained a community health worker who is responsible for delivering vitamins and deworming medicine to the children of Layaye. We also set up a small dispensary and made plans to help the parish hire a nurse by the end of the year. And finally, we initiated a relationship with St. Theresa parish in Hinche (the regional capital) that we hope will lead to the provision of dental care for members of Notre Dame d'Altagrâce.



New Truck Finally Arrives to Help Layaye Parishioners



In February 2008 our ministry learned that Father Ilric had attempted to obtain a truck for his work with the parishioners of Notre Dame d'Altagrâce through an organization in Germany that supplies Toyota trucks to rural parishes throughout the world. Father Ilric had not been successful and he requested our help. The ministry enlisted some German exchange students to contact the ADVENIAT organization via telephone to discuss the matter and understand specifically what was required. ADVENIAT required that IC send \$6000 to pay a portion of the truck's cost and then it would pay the rest. The Haiti Ministry sent a \$6000 check in June 2008 and the waiting began. It seemed that before a truck could be sent there had to be at least 10 trucks ordered for Haiti. In April 2009 the truck arrived at Port au Prince and was imported by the Haitian Bishops' Conference. However, before it could be released, \$1500 in "import fees" had to be paid. However, after those "fees" were paid in June the truck was still being held due to further red tape. Finally, in August 2009 the truck was released and now, according to Notre Dame d'Altagrâce parishioner Frantz Belvy, it is in Layaye and serving the parishioners.

2009-2010 Tution Drive Underway



The annual tuition drive for the school children of Layaye is now underway. This is a wonderful opportunity to have a dramatic impact on a child's life. Additionally, history is clear, one of the first steps in sustained economic development is primary and secondary education. Unfortunately there is no free public education in Haiti. The costs for you to sponsor school children are:

Primary Education grades 1-8: \$50 per student annually
Secondary Education grades 9-12: \$150 per student annually; students must pay tuition and board at the Bishop's High School in Hinche
College: \$2000 students must pay tuition and board in Port-Au-Prince.

Please make checks payable to IC Haiti Ministry and send to the church, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 1695 Central Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104, attention Sue Swaffer.

Upcoming Visitation Trips to Layaye

The Haiti Outreach Ministry is always looking for more members and we especially welcome those who want to make one of our semi-annual visits to Layaye. We have trips scheduled for December 16-23, 2009, as well as, February 2010. Please plan to join us. For more information, call Kelly Fish 274-0234 (December trip) or Debra Bartelli at 301-2360 (February trip). Going on a visitation trip is guaranteed to change your life - don't be afraid to experience what God has put before you!

