

# OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER

## September, 2006

Dear Friends of ***Operation Starfish***:

Let's begin with a prayer...

Oh, God, when I have food,  
Help me to remember the hungry;  
When I have work, help me  
To remember the jobless;  
When I have a warm home,  
Help me to remember the homeless;  
When I am without pain,  
Help me to remember those who suffer;  
And remembering, help me  
To destroy my complacency  
And bestir my compassion.  
Make me concerned enough  
To help, by word and deed,  
Those who cry out for what we take for granted.  
*This we ask in your name, Lord. AMEN*

(From The Salesians)

### **HAITI PILGRIMAGE TRIP BEGINS SEPTEMBER 13**

Parishioners from Nativity Catholic Church in Burke, Virginia are traveling to Haiti this month with their pastor, Fr. Richard Martin. Sponsored by Food For The Poor, Inc., this trip will bring the group of 15 to Cap-Haitien on Haiti's north coast, where several "Nativity Village II" projects are underway. "Nativity Village II" is the second major community development effort funded by Nativity Church's Operation Starfish® program. All of the design and project management is provided by Food For The Poor, Inc., the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest international charity in the U.S., and Nativity Church's longtime partner for work in Haiti.

The work that will be reviewed by Nativity parishioners includes:

- **Nativity Village Housing Development at Prolongé.** This project will provide decent shelter, clean water and sanitation for 250 families currently living in a tidal swamp.

- **Nativity Village Tilapia Farm.** This self-sustainable project is being developed in conjunction with the International Cooperation and Development Fund of Taiwan, who are providing technical expertise. The farm will provide a source of food for the people of the area and a business and vocational training opportunity for the community.
- **Nativity Fishing Village at Petit Anse.** This project will be the first of a series of fishing village co-operatives along the north coast of Haiti. Fifteen families will be involved with the business of deep water fishing beyond the reef off Cap-Haitien. The first 5 boats will be named the “Martin Family Fishing Fleet” in honor of Fr. Martin’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest. Equipment, training, and small business management classes will be provided. The co-op will be required to return a portion of the catch to those who cannot feed themselves, and will also re-invest a percentage of the revenue in maintenance and operation of the fleet.

Also traveling with the group is Dr. Sara Amodio, who currently teaches non-profit organization management at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Amodio is a former Nativity parishioner whose applied doctoral dissertation dealt with vocational training for women in Haiti. Her studies focused on “Nativity Village I,” the first community development project funded by Nativity Church’s Starfish program.

“Nativity Village I” is located in Port-au-Prince in the area known as Merger. Food For The Poor and Nativity Church recently completed housing units for 500 families there. Community toilets and showers have also been provided. A primary school was built and will open this month with 400 children expected to attend. All the children will receive a daily nutritious meal through the joint efforts of Food For The Poor and Caritas Haiti. Work will begin soon on a vocational training center for women and a community chicken farm. A sewing coop will form in conjunction with the vocational center.

While conditions in Port-au-Prince are still too unsettled to allow the Nativity group to visit, another pilgrimage trip is being planned for the first part of 2007. The blessing and dedication of the primary school at Merger will take place at that time.

There is considerable excitement on the part of the first-time Haiti travelers. They are anxious to experience first-hand the needs of the people being served, as well as the progress that has been made through Nativity’s Operation Starfish Lenten program. Operation Starfish at Nativity Church, has raised over \$1.3 million since 1998 for projects to alleviate the plight of the poor in Haiti. In addition, the “Starfish” concept has spread to many other churches and schools across the country.

Fr. Martin has a word of advice for the travelers. *“You will see Christ in the eyes of the poor. You will be blessed by those we serve. You will be changed by this experience.”*

## **OPERATION STARFISH CONFERENCE SET FOR NOVEMBER**

Pastors and church leaders will come together November 1-3, 2006 in Coconut Creek, Florida to share their experiences with Operation Starfish® and help guide the future of this simple fundraising concept for the benefit of the poor. At the suggestion of Fr. Richard Martin, who began the “Starfish” idea at Nativity Catholic Church in 1998, Food For The Poor, Inc. will host this gathering near its headquarters in Coconut Creek.

An interdenominational planning committee is hard at work on the agenda and logistics for the meeting, which will take place at the *Hampton Inn Boca Raton-Deerfield Beach*, a small, quiet, well-appointed hotel that is a gem within the Hilton family. This Hampton Inn is ranked #3 in the country for service excellence. Participants will arrive on Wednesday, November 1, check in and meet each other at a hosted reception Wednesday evening.

Thursday morning will begin with an interdenominational prayer service and tour of Food For The Poor’s headquarters operation. Discussions on Thursday will focus on individual experiences with Operation Starfish, highlighting the blessings that come to congregations as a result of ministering to the poor. Travel opportunities to third world countries will be presented by pilgrimage experts, and a menu of project opportunities will also be described.

Throughout the day, feedback and expectations will be actively sought from participants. The evening will end with a dinner, hosted by Food For The Poor.

On Friday morning, there will be small group discussions on a variety of topics, including how to motivate congregations and how to involve children in programs to assist the poor. The future of Operation Starfish® will be an important discussion topic.

The Operation Starfish Conference will end at noon on Friday, November 3. Transportation will be provided to Ft. Lauderdale Airport for those who are returning home Friday afternoon.

If you have tried Operation Starfish in your parish, congregation or school, or if you are considering trying it in the future, this is a great opportunity to network with others of a like mind. For more information on how you might participate, contact:

Barbara Fazekas, [barbf@foodforthe poor.com](mailto:barbf@foodforthe poor.com), 954-427-2222 x6258, or  
Jim McDaniel, [jamesm@foodforthe poor.com](mailto:jamesm@foodforthe poor.com), 954-415-7723

We’d love to see you in Florida in November!

## **NATIVITY VILLAGE SCHOOL TUITION PROGRAM ANNOUNCED**

For \$52 per year, an elementary school child in our Nativity Village project areas in Haiti can attend school with books, school supplies, and a uniform. In 2005, Nativity Church parishioners sponsored 80 children in *Nativity Village at Merger* by making the \$52 annual tuition payment on their behalf. These children would not otherwise have been able to learn to read and write and help themselves prepare for the future. Fr. Jean Printemps, the local parish priest, has thanked our parishioners in a letter to Fr. Martin, saying that we have given new hope to these young children and their families.

In 2006, as Nativity Church begins development of new “Starfish” projects on the north coast of Haiti, we have found additional children who do not attend school because their parents can’t afford this small tuition payment. At *Nativity Village at Prolongé*, and *Nativity Fishing Village at Petit-Anse*, Fr. Duken Augustin reports that there are dozens of young children who have the potential to learn, but can’t afford to go to school.

At Nativity Church, our Lenten “Starfish” project shows the generosity and mission spirit of our parishioners and friends. We have made a significant difference in the lives of the destitute people of Haiti. For those who would like to do a little something additional during the rest of the year, this tuition program is a great way to make a big difference with a small sacrifice.



Here’s how it works...

- Fr. Printemps and Fr. Augustin maintain lists of families who cannot afford to send their children to school. These families live in or near our *Nativity Village* projects in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, Haiti.
- Nativity parishioners and friends write \$52 checks, payable to “Church of the Nativity” for each child they would like to send to school for one year.
- The funds are sent to Food For The Poor and disbursed to Fr. Printemps and Fr. Augustin and they add the children to the school rosters.
- The project managers at Food For The Poor regularly check on the status of the program for us, and we visit the schools on our annual parish pilgrimages to Haiti. We are also in direct contact with the priests in Haiti through email and telephone.

For more information, contact the Nativity Church office at 703-455-2400 or Jim McDaniel, Operation Starfish Coordinator at [jim@starfishmission.org](mailto:jim@starfishmission.org).

## **A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH HAITI**

Our friends down the road in the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, have an extensive “parish twinning” program that matches some 60 Richmond area parishes with counterparts in Haiti. For many years, Mrs. Adele DellaValle-Rauth and her husband have been leaders in a very effective diocesan effort to assist the Haitian poor. Adele recently wrote about her experiences in Haiti Update, the Haiti Ministry Commission’s newsletter.

“I was not prepared for the level of poverty I found in Haiti. The lack of food, water, of the barest necessities of life, was stark and shocking. But while I lived with the Haitians I saw deeply into their humanity. I found a resilient people who coped and endured their suffering with patience, dignity, and even smiles. Their hospitality was humbling – I truly felt like they bestowed on me their widow’s mite at every turn. I began to feel like part of a larger family – the global family. Haiti is a country of paradoxes, poor indeed materially, but rich in her people, her spirituality, and in going to Haiti we receive much more than we give.”

Thank you Adele, for these words, so appropriate for the Nativity pilgrims who make their journey this month to the land of Ayiti.

## **SEPTEMBER PRAYER REQUESTS**

Our readers have submitted the following prayer requests for this month:

- † For Fr. Martin and all those traveling to Haiti with him this month, that they be moved by the Holy Spirit and be kept safe on their journey;
- † For continuing healing and comfort for the family of Mr. John B. Martin;
- † For Wildith Demorcy in Florida, that she regain her health quickly;
- † For the Fischl family;
- † For Tom Goodwin, that he recover his health after this recent emergency;
- † For Mr. & Mrs. Gus Montecalvo of Rhode Island;
- † For all our children and college students, who are returning to school, please keep them safe and engaged in learning;
- † For Terry Moore, that God’s loving kindness continues to bless him and his family;
- † For Theresa Coursey, that she be comfortable, safe and well-cared-for in her new accommodations;

- † For Normand Gariepy, that he gain strength and healing with each passing day;
- † For Fr. Daniel Ache, who returned to Cameroon carrying our love and support to the young people he serves in the Diocese of Kumbo;
- † For individuals who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christ be felt by all those who struggle;
- † For all our friends at Food For The Poor, and for all those who work here and abroad to alleviate suffering;
- † For the people of Haiti, who struggle against all odds to get back on their feet and to bring their land back to life;

For these and all our intentions, hear us, Oh Lord...

## **HAITIAN WISDOM**

Sentespri a se chef nou.

Nou konnen ke se sèlman li menm  
Ki sonje chemen Jezi te fè a.

Donk, nou konnen se sèlman li menm  
Ki ka montre nou menm chemen sa a.

The Holy Spirit is our leader.

We know that he alone  
Remembers the route that Jesus walked.

So we know that only he can  
Show us the same way.

---Courtesy of Baptist Haiti Mission

## **VISIT US ON THE WEB**

Please visit us at [www.starfishmission.org](http://www.starfishmission.org) . We would appreciate your comments and suggestions. Feel free to contact us at [info@starfishmission.org](mailto:info@starfishmission.org).

For information on Food For The Poor's programs in Haiti, contact Barbara Fazekas at 954-427-2222 x6258; [barbf@foodforthe poor.com](mailto:barbf@foodforthe poor.com). Web: [www.foodforthe poor.org](http://www.foodforthe poor.org).

## **CLOSING THOUGHT...**

“When you’re born, you come out crying, while everyone around you is happy.

When you’re dying, the opposite should be true.

If not, you have spent your life seeking titles, not giving testimony.”

-- Angel Aloma, August 23, 2006

*NEW SUBSCRIPTION?* If you have a friend who would like to receive this newsletter, go to [www.starfishmission.org](http://www.starfishmission.org) to sign up, or send a note to Operation Starfish, Church of the Nativity, 6400 Nativity Lane, Burke, VA 22015.

*CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION?* If you no longer wish to receive OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER, send an email to [info@starfishmission.org](mailto:info@starfishmission.org) or send a note to the address above.

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Edited this month by Jim McDaniel ([info@starfishmission.org](mailto:info@starfishmission.org))

### **OPERATION STARFISH: MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE PERSON AT A TIME**

*As a young boy walked the beach at dawn, he noticed an old man ahead of him picking up starfish and tossing them into the sea. Catching up with the man, the boy asked why he was doing this. The old man explained to the boy that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.*

*“But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish,” exclaimed the boy. “How can your effort make any difference?”*

*The old man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it safely into the waves. He turned to the boy and said, “**It made a difference to that one.**”*

--Based on the writing of Loren Eiseley