



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY'S OPERATION STARFISH® NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER, 2010

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish®*.

Let us begin with a photo meditation...



DURONA PREVIL – ONE MORE STARFISH SAVED

PREVIL FAMILY SAVED FROM THE HORROR OF SHADA

This past July, Church of the Nativity Pastor, Fr. Dick Martin, and Nativity parishioners visited the slum of Shada, along the Cap Haitien canal in Northern Haiti, where they encountered Durona Previl and her 5 sons. Food For The Poor organized this visit as part of Nativity's 2010 mission trip to Haiti. Mrs. Previl had lost her previous home because she could no longer afford the rent of less than \$10 (US) per month. So she found shelter in a shed made from tin scraps. It was so small that all of her children could not fit inside at the same time. Three of her boys were lying in the dirt outside. One of them, an 18-month-old, was in serious distress with malnutrition and respiratory problems.



Fr. Duken Augustin, Food For The Poor's liaison in Northern Haiti, led the Nativity visitors through the rabbit warren of mud, stench and rickety shelters that is called "Shada." "In Polish, the word 'Shada' connotes deep pain or deep sorrow," according to Angel Aloma, Food For The Poor's Executive Director.



Here some 3,500 people live without clean water, sanitation or adequate food and medical care. These are the people who will be moving into Nativity's next development project, "Nativity Village at Chastenoye." This 6th "Nativity Village" project will provide safe, decent shelter, clean water, sanitation, access to education and health care, and opportunities for small business for many Shada families and for earthquake refugees.

Because of Mrs. Previl's immediate plight, Fr. Duken arranged for her to have one of the first houses being built at Chastenoye. Just a week after Nativity's encounter with her, she was moved into a new, bright blue house. Her reaction speaks volumes: "It is only because God brought you to me, that we are saved," she said to Fr. Duken.

WEST VIRGINIA CHURCH HOSTS OPERATION STARFISH AGAIN

By Bonnie DelBalzo, Operation Starfish Coordinator,
St. Leo Catholic Church, Inwood, West Virginia

St. Leo is a parish family located in the panhandle of West Virginia. Fr. Brian Shoda, Pastor, decided to have annual Lenten Starfish Projects after parishioners Mike and Bonnie DelBalzo participated in a week-long Food For the Poor Mission trip in April 2004. They knew that they were called to bring their life-changing mission experience back to their parish family and partner with Food For the Poor. Mike and Bonnie knew that their parish family would be responsive to the needs of the poor and they certainly have. Since 2005, St. Leo Parish has raised funds to provide a fishing village, build single and double homes for 10 families, and repair and renovate an elementary school, all in Jamaica. The photo shows the attractive "Starfish" display at St. Leo's.



Even before visiting Haiti on a pilgrimage with Nativity Church 2 years ago, the Lord put it on Mike and Bonnie's heart to help provide life-saving water projects in desperately needed areas in Haiti. Last year, St. Leo raised enough to build 49 water cisterns in Haiti. This year, their Starfish Project raised money for Haiti's Earthquake Disaster Relief. Recently, Bonnie was able to visit a hospital in Milot, Haiti, which was taking care of many men, women and children suffering injuries from the earthquake. All were being well cared for by dedicated volunteers. It was difficult to see how many amputees there were, particularly the young children. Though they were getting wonderful care, the road ahead of them will be challenging without the rehabilitation services and

prosthetics we have available to amputees in this country. St. Leo's Starfish Project donations are helping the victims of this tragic disaster. It continues to be a privilege and an honor to partner with Food For the Poor and work alongside Nativity Church in these efforts. Nativity Church continues to be an inspiration to churches like St. Leo. God Bless...

THERE ARE NO COINCIDENCES IN LIFE...

By Linda Lenertz, Parishioner, Church of the Nativity

I am sitting on a plastic chair and the sweat is pouring down my face. It's 92 degrees with a ceiling fan overhead and flies everywhere. The place is quite pretty really as the sunshine shines brightly through the orphanage of the little Children of Jesus, a Food For The Poor facility in Santo, near Port au Prince. The Home is painted a bright turquoise blue and the sides are all open in the Haitian style. The beds that the children lay on are starch white but it is hot and the flies come and some children are not able to swat them away as most of the children have special needs. It is hard to look at.

All these children want is to be held and as a grandmother of five all I want to do is hold these babies. But I am sitting on a chair that Father Printemps has put me in and am waiting for the Nativity Group to begin mass. I realize that I should be honored as there were only a few seats available. Some of the older children sit next to me, holding my hand, and their big smiles warm my heart.

I am about 6 feet from the altar. My mind is having trouble focusing on the mass and wondering what I am doing here sitting when I could be in the back holding the babies. Then I get it. I'm embarrassed to say it took awhile, but right in front of me is a nicely groomed young boy dressed in black slacks, long sleeve shirt, dress belt and black shoes. You can tell he cares a great deal about his appearance as his clothes are freshly ironed. But who irons them I wonder? The boy I find out later is called Phillip but his real name is Fiones. Phillip is playing the keyboard at the mass and I sit in amazement as I watch and listen. He plays beautifully and with such passion. The keyboard is old and worn and has seen better days. But that makes no difference to Phillip as he never misses a beat and just ignores the flies as they swarm. In such conditions this talented child flourishes. Did I mention he is blind and only 12 years old?

I then realize that God had me sit there because I was to somehow help this child. How, is still a question that nags at my mind as I wonder how does a blind child survive in Haiti with no family? When asked what he wanted most, Philip answered "classical sheet music in Braille." I took on the challenge. But first, I wanted Phillip to have decent equipment, so with the help of Food For The Poor, we bought a new Yamaha keyboard and sound system and shipped it to Haiti.



Then I tackled the Braille sheet music. You can't just surf the internet or go to a music store as very little Braille music exists. There is a top 30 most requested songs but that is a far cry from the classical that I needed. I have also learned how much we have in the United States to help the blind but very little if any in Haiti. After many e-mails and numerous phone calls to anyone and everyone that could be associated with the blind or just anyone that would listen, John Hanson, Head of the Music Section at the Library of Congress came to my rescue with a box of first class scores. I am sure some rules were stretched but John has a huge heart and a love of music!

I am learning that there are no coincidences in life, only steps in God's plan. This was confirmed when, in my Engaging Spirituality class at Nativity, I was blessed to have met a friend, Jeannie Woods, who graciously donated a refurbished Braille machine for Phillip. Yes this one little boy in Haiti has touched many people's hearts so far and somehow I feel it might just be the beginning.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Linda's first encounter with Philip was in November, 2009. She returned to Haiti in June, 2010, where she was serenaded by Philip on his new keyboard. (see photo above)

GEORGETTE MARTIN SEWING CO-OP DEDICATED

On July 1, 2010, Fr. Martin and Fr. Duken cut a ribbon and celebrated mass at the opening of the Georgette Martin Sewing Co-op in Nativity Village at Demier, near Cap-Haitien, Haiti. This sewing center will provide training for local residents in garment design and fabrication of clothing, school uniforms, table linens and other items. The skills learned here will lead to employment and small business development, providing a revenue stream for the community.



The center is named in honor of Georgette Martin, Fr. Martin's mother, an accomplished seamstress who taught sewing skills to young people all her life. When Mrs. Martin passed away, her family and friends decided on donations to Operation Starfish in lieu of flowers. The resulting gifts paid for construction and ongoing operation of the Georgette Martin Sewing Co-op. Mrs. Martin's legacy will live on in the lives of Haitian women and men, who will make a decent living from the skills they learn.

The Martin family created a similar humanitarian project on the death of John B. Martin, Fr. Martin's Dad. The first fishing village co-op developed in Haiti by Food For The Poor was funded with gifts in honor of Mr. Martin. Nativity Fishing Village at Petit-Anse includes 4 fishing boats, named for members of the Martin family. A larger boat, used to train fishing village captains throughout Haiti, is named the "John B."



The Georgette Martin Sewing Co-op is a multiple use facility, where church services, health clinics, vocational training and community events can be held. It is located within Nativity Village at Demier, the 5th “Nativity Village” development in Haiti. This village was dedicated in November, 2009 during a Nativity mission trip.

NEXT ISSUE: A DETAILED NARRATIVE OF NATIVITY’S RECENT MISSION TRIP TO HAITI

SEPTEMBER PRAYER REQUESTS

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

† For all the clergy, religious and lay ministers who labor “across the street and around the world” to serve the poor and marginalized, that God grant all of them strength, courage and the resources they need to continue their mission work;

† For Carolyn Porter, that she continue to make steady progress as she recovers from surgery, and for her family;

† For the people of Haiti, who continue to struggle with the aftermath of the earthquake, that God provide them a measure of healing, and that He inspire us to keep serving our Haitian sisters and brothers in their need;

† For the repose of the soul of Carmella Matanza of Waltham, Massachusetts, and for her family – may the peace of Christ bring them healing;

† For the repose of the soul of Angelina Porcaro of Adelaide, Australia, who lived 104 years of exemplary faith and compassion, that her extensive family will follow her example of gentleness and love;

† For the repose of the soul of Betty Halligan of Savannah, Georgia, that God grant her family a measure of His peace;

† For all whose lives are in need of resurrection - those who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christ be felt by all those who struggle;

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

FOOD FOR THE POOR – CFC #10328

Food For The Poor is an official charity of the Combined Federal Campaign. If you are a federal, postal, or military employee, you can designate Food For The Poor (CFC #10328) as your preferred charity.



ONE PENNY AT A TIME, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

We have listed Nativity's Operation Starfish as a benefiting charity on GOODSEARCH. Every GOODSEARCH click yields a penny for Operation Starfish. All you have to do is go to www.GoodSearch.com; find the "Who Do You GoodSearch For?" Box; type "Operation Starfish"; and start searching. After you do this the first time, *Operation Starfish* will automatically become your default charity. It's easy to change, however, if you prefer that another good cause receive your search pennies. For example, our friends at **Food For The Poor** are also listed.

HAITIAN WISDOM

Papa,
Mwen aprann ke yon moun ki fo
Nan kalkil, yo rele'l matematisyen.
Se ou ki pi gran matematisyen an
Paske ou kapab konte tout moun
Men ou we nou chak.

Father,
I have learned that one strong
in calculation is called a mathematician.
You are the greatest mathematician
Because you can count all the people
Yet still see each one of us.

CLOSING THOUGHT...

"Sorrow looks back... Worry looks around... But, faith looks up."

-----Fr. Bill Korpi

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

NEW SUBSCRIPTION? If you have a friend who would like to receive this newsletter, go to 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 seastar2004@msn.com or send a note to the address above.

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