

# HAITI MISSION NEWSLETTER

## Religious of Jesus and Mary

### Spring 2022



**This issue showcases the persistence, creativity, and industriousness of the Haiti Mission working in solidarity with our Haitian brothers and sisters, to create opportunities for growth and advancement.**

#### UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN HAITI

Insecurity continues to ravage Haiti, from crowded urban neighborhoods to wide open countryside villages. Just north of Gros Morne, along the most direct route that connects it to the road to Jean Rabel, there have been multiple instances of kidnapping for ransom, just in the past month. Along the national highway that leads south to Port-au-Prince, reports of roadblocks and gang activity are more and more frequent. Given the high sustained level of insecurity, people try to travel only during the day, and even then only when it is absolutely necessary. Despite these precautions, daylight hours are no guarantee of safe passage. The gangs in the north, who are connected to a national network of gangs that are resupplied with weapons and ammunition regularly, can wreak havoc at any time. There is a national awareness of "the bandits" or "the gangs", but there is no clear solution about how to control these groups that are menacing the population. There are general calls for an end to insecurity, or for politicians to do something, but no action plan, either from the public or from those who currently claim to hold power, to respond to the insecurity.

As the gangs and bandits control the main transportation structure, prices across the country continue to skyrocket. A lack of regular access to fuel means that public transportation costs have doubled from what they were 1 year ago. The prices of basic foodstuff continue to increase, which means that many families struggle to put food on the table even once a day. The exchange rate remains at a level of over 100 Haitian Gourde to 1 US dollar. It was at this point that the government most recently intervened to cut the rate in half last year, but there is no sense that they will do so again. In some places, access to cash is constrained because banks cannot easily resupply.

Despite the insecurity, schools continue to function. Young people grapple with an uncertain future, due to the constraints placed upon them by the dire state of affairs in their country. But in the midst of these challenges, they attempt to go about their daily lives. There have been some discussions within civil society about a way forward for the country, but this has not yet led to a generally agreed upon course of action. As they await a solution that would liberate the country from the gangs, farmers are preparing for the largest planting season of the year. As they plant, it gives hope for more food in the coming months, which means less misery.

Farmers need the rains so that they can plant. But recently the rains carved a path of destruction through Gros Morne and points beyond. The main river of Gros Morne swelled to the point that people who live along the river, like Tiden (our friend and long-time main driver), saw parts of their livelihoods wash away with the current. The river swelled so intensely that it washed out the main bridge on the national highway into Gros Morne. Foot and motorcycle traffic are now forced to cross over the old bridge, near Tiden's, but car and truck traffic must ford the river. Work has already started to reconnect this vital route of Port-au-Prince to Port-de-Paix, but it is a large project that will take time. For now, people continue to fashion creative solutions as best they can.

- Geri Lanham, Country Director with Mercy Beyond Borders and former year-long QUEST volunteer

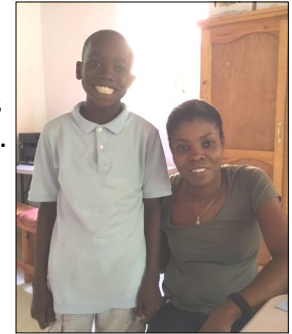
**Editor's note: For insights into what Haitians and advocacy groups are doing to create a way forward out of the violence and insecurity plaguing the country, go to: <https://www.haitiresponse.org/hands-off>.**

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## **A HAPPY STORY - Jean Rabel**

Johnsley Willeamceau is 14 years old and lives with his Grandmother, who has memory difficulties. He takes care of her as best as he can. His Aunt (right) also tries to look after Johnsley and his Gran, while attending to her own household as well.

Often a child like Johnsley, who stays with another family, has little chance of an education because they work for the family and have no time for morning school. But thankfully there is an afternoon school, St. Mary's, who caters to children like Johnsley. Johnsley attends St. Mary's and his computer teacher, Modena, has observed that he is very intelligent. He has learned the basics of IT so quickly.



Last year, at the end of his primary education, it looked like Johnsley had no prospect of going on to secondary school. Modena got in contact with his Aunt to offer a sponsorship, but a birth certificate was required. His Aunt revealed that his mother, who was in another town, had the certificate but would not give it - the mother said she would rather burn it than give it! We do not know the reason why.

Modena approached the director and explained the situation. Alleluia, the director accepted him into the school! Johnsley is so happy to be able to continue his education.

It is your prayer and generous financial donations from the Sowing Seeds project that enable Johnsley and many children like him, to have a chance of education.

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM, Sr. Curín García Calvo, RJM, and Sr. Valle Chías González-Blanch, RJM

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## **EXCITING BASKETBALL MATCH - Jean Rabel**



December 28th was a memorable day because the Jean Rabel basketball team had invited the Mol St. Nicholas team to a friendly match - the first basketball match in many years!

It was an awesome game, with both teams scoring 3 point baskets from long distances. The play was professional, refereed by Jolie Coeur, who was on holidays from Port-au-Prince.



The spectators anxiously watched the scoreboard as one team edged ahead of the other. Applause, cheers and shouts of joy followed each basket. Even at half time, players and spectators were out on the court dancing! In the final minutes, Jean Rabel raced ahead with a winning score of 41 points to Mol St. Nicholas, 36 points!



The event required huge preparation and Sr. Curín García Calvo, RJM (left), started by teaching various basketball skills to the children. She and her committee visited schools, organized a voluntary group who repaired the basketball court, painted the required dimensions and positioned the basketball posts and backboards. Sr. Curín gathered tennis shoes, T-shirts, basketballs, pumps, needles and other equipment so this important day could take place. The children carried 4 heavy seating forms to and from the basketball court. All this culminated in the wonderful match.

The younger players are excited and enthusiastic to learn more, arriving daily at our house, calling for Curin! Thank you, Curín, and all who helped to make this day a reality!

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM

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## **HEALTH CARE VISITORS - Jean Rabel**

Due to insecurity in Haiti and rising incidents of Covid, a Spanish Ophthalmology Team visit was postponed. That didn't stop Dr. Loli and Nurse Carmen though! Undaunted, they bought their tickets and came! Until their arrival there was uncertainty about their flight, but our friendly pilot, Bernard, came to the rescue.



They spent two weeks with us. During mornings they accompanied Valle, Sherline and Wadley on their mobile clinic visits to remote and mountainous areas. A house visit by foot to a house high up on the mountain was a challenge! However the home bound patient was grateful for the care and treatment.

Evenings were spent in giving seminars to hospital staff and to the Pastoral Crianca agents. The first evening in the hospital was spent visiting the sick. It was very fortunate for a young 11 year old boy whose whole body was swollen. The director of the hospital was away and the resident doctors were waiting for his return and advice. Dr. Loli asked permission to treat this poor boy who was suffering dreadfully. She removed 2 liters of liquid. Thank God he began to improve. She surely saved his life. While Jean Rabel has a state hospital, the service it provides leaves a lot to be desired. It was evident from the evening seminars that many had not the necessary experience for their job.

The training with the 14 voluntary pastoral agents was very interesting as all explored together the nutritional value of local foods.... yams, peanuts, cassava, fruits, vegetables and herbs. The Pastoral Timoun Piti agents pass on this information to the mothers in their area, at their monthly gathering, which includes weighing of the young children and a nourishing snack!

Here we all are in the car - Sr. Valle Chías González-Blanch, RJM (left), Dr. Loli (blue), Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM (in pink), Nurse Carmen, (in white) and Sr. Curín José García Calvo, RJM (right).

A very BIG THANK YOU again to Loli and Carmen, who came to Haiti in their holiday time, at their own expense, to give precious service here, and encouragement to us in community! May Jesus and Mary bless both of them!

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM



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## **ACQUACULTURE – Gros Morne**

Tilapia and Carp are raised in the fish basins at the Grepén Center. These two carp (below), held by Agricultural Technician Aneus Saint Jusmar, were raised in the basins at the Grepén Agronomy Center and are now ready for market.

The Agronomists assist those who wish to learn aquaculture and who have the land and water access needed to build their own fish basin using local materials.

On the right, Agronomist Teligene Méléus, gives a seminar on how to smoke fish to conserve it. The drying of the fish, along with the chemicals from the salt and produced by the burning of the wood, work together to preserve the fish. Smoked fish will keep for a long time, even in a tropical country like Haiti and even if you don't have electricity or can't afford a refrigerator.



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## **MOBILE CLINIC - Jean Rabel**

The mobile clinic of Jesus-Mary keeps rolling for health!

In the team we have (left to right): myself, Sr. Valle Chías González-Blanch, RJM, a doctor, Sherline Petit-Homme, a nursing assistant, Celestin Cereste, who is in charge of malnourished minors, and Wadly Lordeus, the driver.



Every day of the week we go to a different town and cover the entire area of Jean Rabel (Northwest Haiti) and there we provide health care to the population: children, the elderly, young people, and pregnant women. Simple cases arrive, that with the means we have, we can solve or continue. But for other complicated cases that need surgery, we must look for other treatment possibilities in other areas of Haiti.

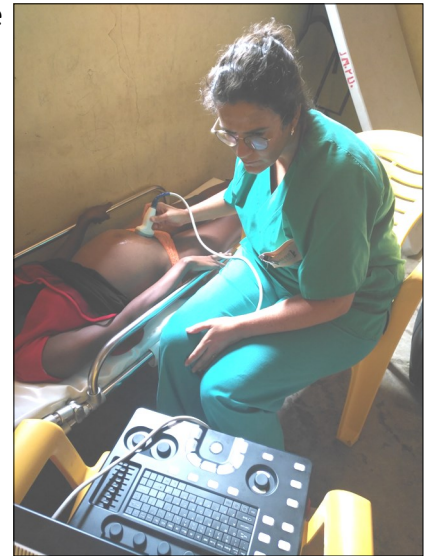
We currently serve 15 different areas and see 25 patients every day!

People are very appreciative of the service we provide. Not only do we go to their town (and they avoid the two-hour drive to the nearest health center), but the mobile clinic is also much more affordable.

This year we started a project to care for children under 5 with severe malnutrition. We already follow more than 60! The reality in Haiti is that many families do not have sufficient means to provide adequate food for their sons and daughters. This has led to an increase in the number of minors with severe malnutrition. We work to minimize the consequences for these boys and girls.

New features of the mobile clinic are a portable ultrasound machine, which helps us with diagnoses, as well as a laboratory that we are creating to give our patients proper care. On the right, I am using the ultrasound on a pregnant patient. We also have Dr. Laura Casallas, a medical volunteer, with us for a few months supporting the Project.

- Sr. Valle Chías González-Blanch, RJM



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## **PIG HUSBANDRY - Gros Morne**

Here, Songe Senjelus, Agronomist Tech at the Grepn Agronomy Center, is assisting this sow to give birth to a litter of 9 piglets.

As soon as they are born, the piglets attempt to suckle. Piglets are born with sharp teeth and will fight to nurse on the most forward teats, which produce more milk than teats further back. Once teat order is established, the piglets tend to nurse on the same teat each time.



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## 5th EARTHQUAKE RELIEF TRIP - to Tòbèk, South



Fr. Jean Bernard Lauradin sent his driver to Port-au-Prince to collect seeds for the farmers in Toirac and surrounding areas. The seeds were donated through the RJM community in Gros Morne, supported by the “Quixote Center”, the organization that is providing funding to send seed support to the South.

We used this opportunity to travel to the zone Lamonj, Tòbèk, South Department of Haiti.



We have been able to provide construction materials to 19 families. 15 families are repairing damaged parts of their houses. 4 families are constructing new houses which each cost about \$5000 US dollars. This woman and the others are most grateful to receive the aid - possible because of the generous donations we received from donors. God bless you!

The journey was long and intense. We passed through Petion-Ville and Laboule to avoid Martissant which has become a **RED ALERT ZONE** blocked by the bandits. It alone took us about 2 hours. Still, we couldn't miss the natural beauty and serenity of Laboule. Most of the area has good roads and well constructed houses (only the elite class can afford to live here). Once we reached Carrefour, which adjoins Martissant, we felt relieved and calm. The rest of the journey, though long, was peaceful.



After delivering the seeds to Toirac, we went to Les Cayes and stayed with the Sacred Heart Brothers. Early the next morning, we were off to Tobek accompanied by Br. Marc Sony, a brother of the Sacred Heart. Br. Marc has been a great help to us in buying and distributing the materials to the families because we couldn't travel to the south due to insecurity in Port-au-Prince.

Tobek is situated up on the mountain and we climbed for almost an hour and a half to reach the people we are helping. Still it was worth the climb to see the progress families were making on construction. (On the left are Sr. Farzana Philip, RJM, Sr. Kiabembua Mayibelanga Veronique, ICM, and Sr. Enden Moreno, ICM.)

The ICM Sisters were to stay in their Carrefour Joute community. Since I would be returning alone and due to the insecurity and kidnapping in Haiti (and more so in Port-au-Prince where I was headed), I was advised to return by plane.

I had an online ticket to Port-au-Prince, but when I reached the airport I discovered that the booking lasts only 24 hours and if I had not paid by then, it cancelled automatically. I asked them to keep me standby and, to my dismay, I was told that there are already 8 people for standby tickets. So even if I had waited for the evening flight, I didn't stand a chance. There are only two flights a day from Les Cayes to Port-au-Prince and all were packed for the next 3 days. Impossible! Thank God the ICM Sisters accompanied me to the airport and arranged alternate travel. Getting home was so much more difficult than anticipated!

Thank you to our ICM & RJM Sisters, Br. Marc Sony, SC, donors and well-wishers who have supported the mission in Haiti with their unwavering prayers, support and generous finances. Without your spiritual and financial support, it would not have been possible to reach these vulnerable people in the south.

- Sr. Farzana Philips, RJM and the ICM and RJM Sisters Haiti

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## **PASTORAL TIMOUN PITI - Beldorin**

The “Pastoral Timoun Piti” program which originated in Brazil and was introduced here in the northwest by Sr. Bridget O’Driscoll, OP, is alive and changing lives in the rural areas of Jean Rabel.



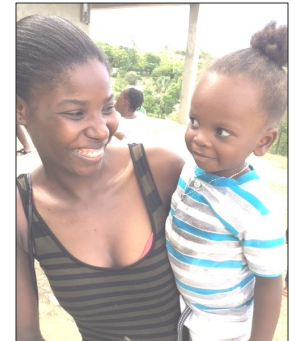
The children were weighed, using either the pink foot scales (a little girl is standing on) or the hanging suspension one for the babies. A 6-year-old child present that day had the weight of a 4-year-old! Afterwards, healthy refreshments were distributed - bananas, cassava and natural juice.



A circle formed (including this mother and daughter) and all joined hands and each one passed a good wish to their neighbour! Then Curin (left) took her first ride ever on a donkey!

All went home happy!

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM



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## **New Learning Method—Jesus-Mary Preschool - Gros Morne**

Taking into account the environment in which the Jesus-Mary Preschool is located and the various challenges we face, we once again redefined our educational strategy. The new strategy allows us to respond to the needs of the children by enhancing the factors essential to their physical, psychological and emotional development.

We have created a “media library” which contains audio-visual materials (like the one being shown on the right to these preschoolers), documents, documentaries, nursery rhymes, films, etc. The supplementary materials will help our children better understand the lessons. And, as they watch the videos and films, they can also work on their language and pronunciation.

The students really enjoy these supplementary materials and the new pedagogical methods allow us to impart knowledge to them much more easily.

- Sr. Middia Doute, RJM and the Gros Morne Community



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## **DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN - Port-au-Prince**

March 8th was an exciting day because the *Pas a Pas Women* had been planning for long time to mark International Women's Day with their favourite food and drinks and to celebrate together. They came well dressed and some of them even brought some eatable things to share with the others. It was one of those special days when all were present and arrived on time, some even before time. They also made also lasagne with Ms. Eliane Philocles, their cuisine instructor and learned to set the dining table.



Sr. Middia Doute, RJM's recorded message (below) for the day was played and we all listened to it with great interest. At the end of it, all clapped spontaneously and said how true it is.

Each one shared what this day signifies for her. Some shared very deep thoughts and all agreed on how strongly they value their freedom and wouldn't want, at any cost, to lose it! Some of them also remarked that at times they become slaves to their husbands and children when they give in to their demands out of love, but they neither recognise their love nor their sacrifices. To sum it up, in reality men don't care much about WOMEN'S DAY or women's rights in general. It's the women who have to take charge and demand their rightful place in the society. If the women keep silent, they will be taken advantage of.



March 8th is one day to commemorate women's day, but actually every day is a women's day. To end the celebration, we all danced to lively Haitian music....

- Sr. Farzana Philip, RJM

## **DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN - Jean Rabel**

International Women's Day, was celebrated on March 8th, by the women of "Atelier Thevenet" workshop.

Sr. Curin García Calvo, RJM, Emanie Dervil, Veronique Verne and Frazina Saint-Phorin had prepared well for this event. Curin had contacted five women who shared aspects of their life experiences, by video.

Sr. Middia Doute, RJM gave a rousing introduction to the role of women. Sherline Petit-Homme spoke about the importance of health. Sr. Belén Ingelmo, RJM shared thoughts on religion, and asked how does each one perceive God. Paloma Peñas Dendariena discussed the merging of culture and education. Sr. Josela Gil Navarro, RJM had each one reflect on the merits of working together economically. Emanie and Frazina had prepared a snack and helped lead the proceedings!



It was a truly profound experience as women rarely get time and space to reflect and share on their own role in society. They shared their responses to the questions, wrote down six relevant points on their participation in their local communities, and tried to cope with a creative exercise Josela presented!

The Women in Atelier Thevenet are alive and active, bringing about change and promoting equality, justice and peace in this northwestern corner of Haiti!

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM

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## STAY TUNED!

The Haiti Mission will soon celebrate **25 YEARS in Haiti!** Watch for stories honoring the occasion and news of festivities, in the Fall newsletter.

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### **A Sad Reality - Jean Rabel**

Mezelia (on the far left) lives in this shack. She and her husband have at least five grown children but most left the local area, seeking a better life in the capital Port-au-Prince. Both were hardworking parents trying to provide food and education for their family. They saved money to buy a plot of land in Cotton, near the school their grandchildren could attend. They intended to build a family house. Their mule helped them transport goods to and from the market until one night a bandit came and stole the mule.



Some time after, Mezelia's husband (lying down in picture on the left) got sick and had a stroke. He lies almost lifeless in their makeshift shack and cries and sighs. Still, Mezelia is thankful for the medicines from the Mobile Clinic and cares for him as best as she can under the circumstances.

One of their daughters, who has two little girls, came to live with them. The two girls, ages 10 and 12, are attending school and progressing well. However, their mother has had a nervous breakdown, and is in the hospital.

Then another daughter and her young baby arrived at their shack.

To add to their woes, a 14-year-old grandson (above) has come from Port-au-Prince to live with them. His parents fear for his life and that he may be recruited into one of the vicious gangs that are operating in the city, and think he will be safer in the northwest with his grandparents. Plans are afoot to enroll the grandson in school.

Every effort is being made to try and get support for the family and to build them a decent house. Nobody should have to live the end of their years in these terrible conditions.

Please keep them in mind and support them in whatever way you can.

- Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM



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Donate online at [www.rjmusa.org](http://www.rjmusa.org), click on "Support us" above the green bar, select "Donate Online" and fill in information, select "RJM Haiti Fund" as designation.

Donate by check payable to "**Religious of Jesus and Mary**" with "**Haiti Fund**" on the memo line, and mail to:

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*If you would like to donate specifically towards 2020 Earthquake relief, please call the office at (202) 526-3203 or email [mshakeri@rjmusa.org](mailto:mshakeri@rjmusa.org) for information and instructions.*