

HAITI MISSION NEWSLETTER

Religious of Jesus and Mary

Summer 2021



REMEMBRANCES - of Sr. Nazareth Ybarra, RJM

We are deeply saddened to announce the death of Sr. Nazareth Ybarra, RJM on July 13, 2021. She is shown here receiving the William Jefferson Clinton Goodwill for Haiti Award in 2019, from the **HAVEN Community Foundation**.

“Naza” came to the mission in Gros Morne, Haiti, in 1999, the first of RJM’s from Spain and other countries who joined the USA-Haiti Province serving the people of this poorest country in the western hemisphere. It was her desire to be with the poor that led Nazareth to minister in Haiti, and she did so with creativity and passion until illness forced her to retire to her native Spain.

Sr. Jacqueline Picard, was one of those to welcome Nazareth to Gros Morne: *“I always felt that Nazareth had an understanding of the struggles of the Haitian people. She was a woman of action on their behalf. She knew how important work was for everyone, and she opened two workshops to meet that need. There are many stories....”*



Sr. Vivian Patenaude also shared life with Nazareth in Gros Morne, and it was these two who left there to make the first expansion of JM presence in Haiti when they began the Jean Rabel mission in 2002:

“Ideas to help (the poor) came quickly and were carried out before you knew it and brought to completion each time. (She) believed in the abilities of others and found creative ways of bringing them out.” Nazareth was “a woman strong of will and rooted in her faith,” and “Living with Nazareth was an adventure!”

Sr. Rose Kelly of Ireland who shared life and mission with Nazareth for the final years of her ministry in Haiti: *“Naza was not interested in ‘politeness’; she was interested in passion. Passion for Justice! Compassion for the little ones! Passionate love for the most abandoned and neglected! But underlying all, passion for Jesus.”*

Sr. Pat Dillon shares the following:

“I remember how she worked with the women in the Jean Rabel workshop near Christmas time. Using local materials they designed nativity scenes to sell to the many visitors. But while they worked, Naza would draw out of them the Christmas story.

That's what she did too with the parables the boys here in Gros Morne painted. Naza would have them read and discuss the parable, i.e., the Good Samaritan, was a favorite. Then they would paint the story. You could find the parables on the doors and windows of the artist shop and on canvases sold in Spain, Ireland and the USA.”



Sr. Marge Perron, Provincial:

Nazareth was truly a gift to our province and to Haiti, especially in Jean Rabel, for more than 20 years. She was a vital, warm, artistic, creative, fun-loving woman. She was also a fierce advocate for those made poor, especially women. Nazareth was totally dedicated to and very passionate about our mission and ministry in Haiti. As we mourn her death, we give thanks for Nazareth’s life, presence, witness. And, we express our deep gratitude to the Province of Spain for sending her to serve among us in Haiti! Mesi anpil!

Remembrances are continued on the back page.

UPDATE ON SITUATION IN HAITI

Haiti has experienced what would seem to be a century's worth of major traumatic events over the course of just 3 months. After **the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July**, a monumental event that profoundly impacted generations of Haitians and the Haitian diaspora, it seemed that nothing worse could happen to the country. **Gangs were everywhere, kidnappings were prevalent**, even in the countryside, and no one really knew what power the interim government of Prime Minister Ariel Henry might hold. Then the month of **August brought a huge 7.2 earthquake** that leveled the majority of buildings in the southern towns and regions of Les Cayes, Jeremie, and Nippes (circled in red on map).

Everyone on the island felt the earthquake, which brought back the trauma of the January 2010 earthquake that obliterated Port-au-Prince. Once again, there is no Haitian untouched by the impact of this cataclysmic event. People who live in the north are grateful to have avoided direct damage from the earthquake, but they have family members, friends, and connections in the south who they know are suffering immensely. Fundraising efforts, donation drives, and communal prayer services have been organized to help the south rebuild. Locals and foreigners have come together to offer medical care, basic emergency supplies, and materials to begin the rebuilding process.



Since Gros Morne was not directly impacted by the earthquake, schools here continue to prepare for the opening of the school term on September 6. (The Haiti Mission communities of Jean Rabel and Port-au-Prince were also not directly affected. See green circles on map.) Precautions are being taken against the ongoing issue of insecurity. Parents who live outside of the town of Gros Morne are searching for housing arrangements in town so that their children will not have to travel at dawn or dusk, when kidnappings have occurred along the national highway north of Gros Morne. There is an increased police presence in Gros Morne to ideally act as a deterrent to thieves who have been targeting market women en route to market, but that has not completely resolved the issue. Covid-19 is still a problem. People manage their daily lives as best they can, armed with the hope that despite everything, they can still put one foot in front of the other and work toward their future because if they do not, then all would be lost.

EARTHQUAKE RELIEF - Visit to Toi Raque, Camp Perrin and Cayes

On August 24th, 7 sisters went on a 3-day visit to the south and took supplies to the earthquake survivors.

We were a group of 6 *Immaculate Cœur Immaculé de Marie* Sisters and 1 Religious of Jesus and Mary. We requested a small truck from **HAITI TRANSPORT** (who provides this service free of charge to all the Congregations/Organizations taking aid to the south of the country). Along with our RJM car and one borrowed from the Parish Priest of the *Holy Family Church* in Toi Raque, the Haiti Transport driver, a helper and a man to sit in the back of the truck and guard the supplies, we had room to transport ourselves and all the supplies.



After loading the supplies, our small convoy left Port-au-Prince and passed Martisan (where **gangs** are very active and attack vehicles). Later we came to **broken roads** and the truck driver refused to go further. It took us time to convince him but we called his boss to get permission because there is no alternative road. **Meanwhile people started gathering and asking us to give them aid too. It was a frightening moment.**

We reached Toi Raque and prepared the kits with basic necessities for 100 families: rice, bean, oil, flour, sugar, spaghetti, bath soap, washing powder, toothpaste and toothbrushes. 6 Tarpaulins were given to Fr. Bernard for church services and the rest to some of the deserving families. There was a funeral service going on when the terrible earthquake took place. The priest was not hurt but 20 people died. The driver of Fr. Bernard who drove us from PAP to Toi Raque lost 5 members of his family. There are now some families living in the Parish house with the priest. Others have put up tents in the courtyard in front of the Parish house while some others come only at night and sleep wherever they find a little space.



In Cayes, we stayed with the Sacred Heart Brothers and distributed kits. Then we drove to Toi Raque and distributed more kits accompanied by Fr. Bernard and his team. Most of the houses there had fallen flat, as you can see.



People have lost almost all they had. We distributed the kits (the blue bag this man holds) to small groups of 4 to 6 families gathered at one place to receive the aid.

Even with all the planning, some people followed us back to the Parish house we were staying at and demanded to get a kit. They got angry with us and with the Parish Priest because at that point we had nothing left to give them. This was the most difficult part.



We went to Mailloux to see the damage there and meet some families in order to plan our next trip. Many houses are damaged with big cracks, but not fallen like in Toi Raque. Still, the houses are not safe to sleep in so mostly people sleep in the courtyards. People wanted tents or tarpaulin so they have somewhere to stay and safeguard whatever is left of their belongings. Others asked for medicines, as the nights are a bit cold in the south and it rains almost daily and people are getting sick. It rained the whole night and part of the morning. I could not get my mind off the families without any shelter.....



Then back in Cayes, a Protestant Church, Legliz Jesus Christ, had about 225 families who had taken shelter inside. They were using the Sunday school classrooms, the halls and had put some tents in the courtyard. That day the church team looking after them had no donations to cook anything for them. Since we had nothing with us either, we went to the depot and bought sacks of rice, beans and a gallon of oil for them.

There are many rules and regulations regarding getting aid into Haiti and organizations have to be registered in Haiti to do that. In addition, one has to have connections and pay a lot of taxes to get the donations into the country, which is harder than one can imagine. If anyone would like to help in any way, the best option is to send money and then we will buy things locally and distribute to the people. (see bottom of page 8)



Thank you to all my RJM family, ICM Sisters, Sacred Heart Brothers, Family and Friends who have supported this mission in Haiti with their unwavering prayers, support and finances without which it would not have been possible to reach out to these beloved people of God who are now suffering and are in pain.

- Sr. Farzana Philip, RJM

BUILDING THE FR. TONY COOTE JR. HIGH - Fon Ibo

Sr. Pat Dillon, RJM hosted a beautiful groundbreaking ceremony for the Fr. Tony Coote Junior High at Fon Ibo the morning of Tuesday July 6th!

The construction is being financed by **Soley Haiti** in honor of Fr. Tony Coote, (diocesan of Dublin, former chaplain at our provincial house), who passed away all too soon on August 28, 2019 -- a great friend of the Fon Ibo community and Jesus-Mary School.

Parents, teachers, students, and community members gathered in thanksgiving for the generosity of Fr. Tony, along with all of the benefactors, and his guiding spirit for this project.

We heard reflections from parents, students, teachers, the administration and one of the original founders of the school. It is incredible to reflect upon the impact of Jesus-Mary School in Fon Ibo, and how this new chapter of junior high will so positively impact the whole school community!



Each participant carried a foundation rock to the site where the classrooms would be built. Fr. Dachemy blessed the site where the whole school community was gathered. This short video clip shows parents and students bringing the rocks for the foundation of the new wing: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/yAr48sTZgbyA7K5p7>.

Our contractor, Fritznel Noelsin, and his team began work the next morning and below is the Fr. Tony Coote Junior High almost finished!



SWEET POTATOES, YUM!



Sweet potatoes used to be a popular crop in Gros Morne, but then a weevil infestation led the majority of farmers to abandon sweet potatoes in disgust as the metallic blue with black heads mealy weevils took over their fields.

Over the past 5 years, the agronomy team led by agronomists Guy Marie Garcon and Teligene Meleus, has steadily been sourcing good quality sweet potato cuttings and offering a variety of weevil eradication options as a way to encourage farmers in Gros Morne to plant sweet potatoes again.

This summer, for the first time since the weevil free sweet potatoes initiative began, Guy Marie was able to purchase sweet potato cuttings from farmers in Gros Morne to expand the program. In previous years, he has been forced to travel 2 hours away to Pilate in order to find quality cuttings. This is an important step in the process of returning sweet potato output levels in Gros Morne to their historic level of 12 metric tons per year.

With 5 metric tons harvested in 2020, and over 50 farmers on the waitlist to receive weevil free sweet potato cuttings, Gros Morne is on its way to reclaiming this crop as a local staple.

PAIRING IRRIGATION WITH A SEED NURSERY - Bigue

Bigue is one of the driest zones of Gros Morne. Locals whose houses are concentrated near the Bigue Community School must walk, with a donkey if they are fortunate, over 45 minutes one-way to the nearest natural water source that regularly has water. The majority of people in Bigue attempt to garden, but it is a real challenge to succeed without water for irrigation.

But thanks to a partnership with ***Mercy Focus on Haiti***, Bigue was identified as one of the zones to receive 4 ferrocement cisterns. These cisterns, plus two 1000 gallon plastic reservoirs, add considerably to the amount of water available to the community for irrigation purposes. Here, Mèt Edmund, the Bigue School Director stands in front of one of the cisterns.



To jumpstart a new agricultural planting season, the Grepen agronomy team held workshops with Bigue farmers to teach them the techniques that they would need to create a plant nursery near the new cisterns.



Local farmers worked together to construct the nursery out of wooden posts and palm fronds. They will take turns watering and weeding the young plants. When good quality young plants are large enough to be transplanted, they will be sold to local farmers at a very affordable price.

Farmers who attended a training to learn new land preparation and water management skills were provided with vegetable seed starter kits which included leeks, spinach, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and eggplant.

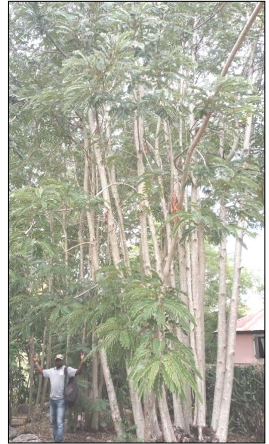
By marrying irrigation and water management with land preparation and quality seeds, the agronomy team is hopeful that the new seed nursery and family gardens will succeed in Bigue.

THE LORAX PROJECT: Out of the Flames

In the Spring newsletter, we reported on a slash-and-burn fire that got out of control and engulfed farmland in the zone of Lakret. Families who are members of The Lorax Project reforestation initiative fell victim to this fire, as hundreds of trees were lost. Educational efforts to prevent another accidental fire are ongoing via a network of community organizations throughout the parish of Dekosye.



Thanks to their incredible efforts to replant and the encouragement of Agronomist Teligene Meleus, Ag-tech Aneus Saint Jusmar, and Assistant Jolene Sylvesse, 800 new trees are now almost 3 feet tall and should look like these 30-foot 6-year-old trees on the right when fully grown.



These Lorax Project trees are being grown sustainably for charcoal and building materials for family use, and also for sale so that families can supplement their income by selling charcoal and wood.



The annual census of The Lorax Project was completed in August 2021, and the team found over 11,000 trees growing in the fields of 85 families, despite a very dry rainy season.

35 of these families are piloting a technique of planting a garden amidst their trees, as the man on the right has done by planting corn among his trees. The pilot results will be known once crops are harvested in January.

11 families who did not have land to plant trees received goats as part of The Lorax Project, with the intention of teaching people that there is a way to responsibly raise goats near tree plantings. To date, the goats have enjoyed a diet of grasses brought to them each day by their owners, and they have not eaten any of the young trees.



WOW! - Look what the Agronomy Team saw

Guy Marie Garcon, Head Agronomist for the Karitas Gros Morne agronomy team located at the Grepén Center, took this photo when he was traveling through Koraiy and it made us all say "WOW!!".

It shows the stark contrast between a farmer who employed contoured natural ramps to plant his crops on the mountain (green circle) and others who did not (red circles).

This farmer may have learned the technique from Nerile, the agronomist at the Grepén Center who teaches contoured natural ramp farming. This photo confirms the outstanding results of farming techniques taught at the Center.

5th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SR. ISA SOLA, RJM

Sr. Isa Sola, RJM was shot and killed in a robbery in Port-au-Haiti five years ago, on September 2, 2016.

In Barcelona Spain, the city of her birth, a new exhibit of her beautiful photographs of Haiti is on display at the Museo Diocesà de Barcelona, along with her guitar and camera. The exhibit is open to the general public from September 2nd - November 8th, to promote solidarity with Haiti, and will be visited by all the students of the JM's schools in Barcelona.



To read remembrances of Sr. Isa or to leave one yourself, visit: <https://www.rjmusa.org/ode/403>.

REMEMBRANCES - of Sr. Nazareth Ybarra, RJM (continued from page 1)

Foret des Arts graduates, who were trained by Sr. Nazareth created a fitting tribute:

When Sr. Naza died, Bernadino (the artist shop manager who had worked with her from the start) sent word to Foret des Arts graduates. The artists decided to pay tribute to her memory by collectively painting a mural of her on the wall of the Foret des Arts artists' shop.

The well executed painting is a real tribute to the talent Sr. Naza helped them discover within themselves.

On the right, but not necessarily in order, are Pierre Vanord, Domus Berthony, Yves Renerson Desse, Dejardien Clauvens, Max Dobson, Jean Philippe Kelly, Mr. Jean (the Jean 23 Forest guardian), Jonas Jean Noel and Jeune Frand Laurince.



Ms Geri Lanham, a former year-long QUEST volunteer, now in Haiti as Country Director for Mercy Beyond Borders and the author of many of this Haiti Mission newsletter's articles:

Sr. Naza was an incredible force for good in the world. She employed fantastic hand gestures, facial expressions, and 3 languages to tell the most incredible stories. Sometimes mere sound effects were enough to express what she was feeling. Her trilingual stories live on with titles like "the little feet under the curtain" and "the money in the latrine".

Because she was so open to experiencing everyday life, Sr. Naza lived it vividly. Events that would be completely commonplace or ordinary to anyone else took on a whole new vibrancy when Sr. Naza lived them via her creative spirit. Sr. Naza was a champion of the arts and of beauty in a way that inspired others to realize the beauty around them that they may have otherwise overlooked.

Hers was a life well lived!



**Haiti Mission Fund
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Donate online at www.rjmusa.org, click on "Support us" above green bar, select "Donate Online" and fill in info., 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:

**Haiti Mission Fund
c/o Religious of Jesus and Mary
821 Varnum Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017**

Earthquake Donations

(Not affiliated with the Haiti Mission Fund and NOT tax-deductible)

If you would like to donate toward earthquake relief please send donations via wire to Sr. Farzana Philip, RJM using the information below. Please understand that Sr. Farzana will use/redirect the funds for earthquake relief in the way she thinks best. You will not receive an accounting of how the funds sent to her were spent. Sr. Farzana WILL NOT be able to send you a tax donation letter for the purposes of being able to take a tax deduction. (The first \$37usd of any donation will be kept by the Haitian Government as a tax, with Sr. Farzana receiving the amount above \$37usd.)

If you need to contact Sr. Farzana, her email is: farzanaphilip@gmail.com.

Bank: UNIBANK S.A. SWIFT CODE: UBNKHTPP

Bank Address: 183 AVE LUTHER KING. TURGEAU. PORT AU PRINCE (HAITI)

ACCOUNT: RELIGIEUSES JESUS-MARIA C/G MISSION: 250-1022-1555142.

Convent Address: RUE CHOCHOTTE #9 BABIOLE, TURGEAU, PORT AU PRINCE, HAITI. (This address is given in case you need it when wiring a donation. **DO NOT** mail a donation to this address because mail delivery is highly unreliable in Haiti, and almost certainly the mail will never actually reach Sr. Farzana. The only way to send her money for earthquake relief is by bank wire transfer.)

You may also want to visit this link to other organizations doing earthquake relief in Haiti:
<https://www.rjmusa.org/content/haiti-earthquake-letter-regarding-donations>.