



March 6, 2026

A TRIP TO NOTRE DAME - by Train

To many theologians, it may seem impossible to believe, but I had never been to the University of Notre Dame until last month! I went for a small seminar, a gathering of scholars who study integral ecology in various interdisciplinary aspects. The group is convened by Fr. Emmanuel Katangole, a priest from Uganda and a professor at the University of Notre Dame. An even more special connection is that he directs the Bethany Land Institute in Uganda, a center for land restoration with many similarities to our Bethany.



When Fr. Katangole invited me to join this group of scholars for bi-monthly Zoom conversations about different themes in integral ecology, I was glad to join. The group shares an interest in hunger, farms, farm worker justice, food security, theology of the earth, and these very "grounded" aspects of integral ecology. Bethany Center Hudson Valley fits right in with our focus on caring for the land right here, and inspiring others to find God through the peace of creation by way of our virtual programs wherever they may be.

Something that made this visit memorable was not just the wonderful conversations with inspiring and friendly people, but how I got there! I decided to avoid the very likely scenario of being stranded in Chicago on a February night should a big squall decide to blow in off the lake. I don't know about you, but whenever I think about the Chicago airport, I think of storms, delays, and missed connections. I thought, why not take the train and just relax?



I had a moment of prayer before our Lady in the church of St. John the Baptist by the Moynihan train hall in New York City, while getting ready to board the train.

I took an 18-hour Amtrak Lake Shore Limited, and it was a great experience. Seeing the view up the Hudson River toward Albany and Schenectady was amazing. The peace and quiet of my tiny sitting car was a micro retreat, and visiting the dining car was like going back in time. Many of you may have enjoyed this experience, but it was a first for me.



I had a very cute tiny sleeping car, which even had a little fold-out table with its own checkerboard.

Traveling a little bit differently fit right in with the theme of the conference and how we need to adapt our habits to care for our common home. Excessive use of fossil fuels is desecrating God's creation. We have other options, and often they're not second-class choices but more peaceful ways to reach the same end. I'm looking forward to my next train trip and another chance to reflect on integral ecology as more than a concept or idea, but a lived practice to cherish.

- Dr. Erin Lothes, Executive Director

[Click here!](#) to connect to Bethany Center Hudson Valley on Instagram.

SUPPORTING A COMPANION IN MISSION

Jack Fontil entered the environmental program last year. Olby Desir discovered that Jack had trained as an agronomist, but was unemployed.

Jack gradually took on various tasks in the school gardens, preparing the ground, planting, watering, supervising, harvesting.

Over time Olby became aware of the many responsibilities Jack was carrying:

- In 2020 his father died of a stroke
- Jack got married in the same year
- Soon after his mother got Alzheimer's
- His former lecturer and supportive employer began to give unwanted attention to his wife. His employment was terminated.
- Jack was without employment for two years
- In 2025 his sister died leaving 4 orphans
- His motorbike was in need of service and repairs

There were days Jack went without a meal. He was juggling time between 3 different locations...Jean Rabel for work, La Reserve to be with his Mother, and Portdepaix to be with his wife who was taking care of one of his dead sister's children.

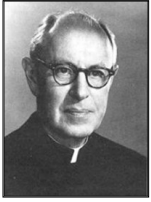
It is with your help and support that Jack now has his salary increased, his motorbike is repaired, he is eating properly and is more able to cope with the huge responsibilities he is carrying. THANK YOU!

- The Jean Rabel RJM Team



Here, Jack Fontil (right) brings a gift of some tomatoes, sweet peppers and papaya to Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM (left). He is accompanied by Olby Desir (center).

UPCOMING LIVESTREAM



Faith, Democracy, and the Common Good
Lessons from John Courtney Murray for Our Times

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

6:00 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. EST

[Click here to register](#)

At this timely dialogue in Dahlgren Chapel of the Sacred Heart, four leading Catholic thinkers and scholars will examine the foundations, challenges, and opportunities for a principled relationship between faith and democracy in our current moment. Participants include Cardinal Robert McElroy, formerly of San Diego and now in Washington, DC.

The U.S. is struggling to address the erosion of core constitutional freedoms; the uses and abuses of executive, legislative, and judicial power; intense polarization; and even horrific political violence. In this context, some are uncertain or wary of the role of our Catholic faith in our challenged pluralist democracy, while others see an urgent need and opportunity to renew our commitment to the principles at the heart of Catholic social teaching.

Fr. John Courtney Murray, S.J., whose thought changed the course of the Catholic Church's engagement with modern democracy, proposed a way forward: human dignity, the foundational principle of Catholic social teaching, is best served when people pursue truth and the common good in a free and deliberative way, and when states defend the freedoms necessary for people to do so.

This Dahlgren Dialogue on faith, democracy, and the common good will look back at the contributions of Murray to our understanding of the role of faith in a democracy; look around at current threats and challenges facing democratic institutions; and look ahead to the roles and responsibilities of leaders and people of faith to protect, revitalize, and renew our democracy in pursuit of the common good.

UPDATE ON TPS

Thanks to a groundswell of calls to Congress, [Discharge Petition 15](#), which would allow a vote in the US House on a 3-year extension for Haitian TPS (Temporary Protected Status), now has 165 signatories. That means we are 75% of the way towards reaching the 218 signatures required. Three Republicans have signed and a fourth is needed.



If you have not already done so, please call or write and encourage your Congressperson to sign Discharge Petition 15. Invite family and friends to contact their Congressperson. Sr. Pat Dillon has more information if you would like it.

If Temporary Protected Status for Haiti is not extended, people our RJM sisters have worked with over the years, who live and work in the USA with TPS can be picked up and held in the type of warehouse Bishop Cahill deplors on the USCCB website: www.usccb.org/news/2026. "The Thought of Holding Thousands of Families in Massive Warehouses Should Challenge the Conscience of Every American," says Bishop Cahill.

- Sr. Pat Dillon

AT LONG LAST, A HOME! - Jean Rabel, Haiti

The joy and excitement as a family enters their new home. These photos tell the tale !

They have survived for years in unbelievable conditions, such as crowded into one or two “rooms “, sleeping on the bare earth, or a cardboard mat. They suffered the leaks during rainfalls.....wet clothes, school books drenched, colds, fevers, illness.....sometimes leading to death. However there was always hope for a better life.

Here is the inside of this particular hut.



They never imagined that it would be possible to have their very own home! But look now!



They have the papers to prove it and so do these families in “before” and “after” photos.



Thank you for helping to make it a reality, ensuring these families are receiving respect and dignity. The children have a better chance of progressing in education and maybe some day be builders themselves, not just of houses but of a better Haiti.

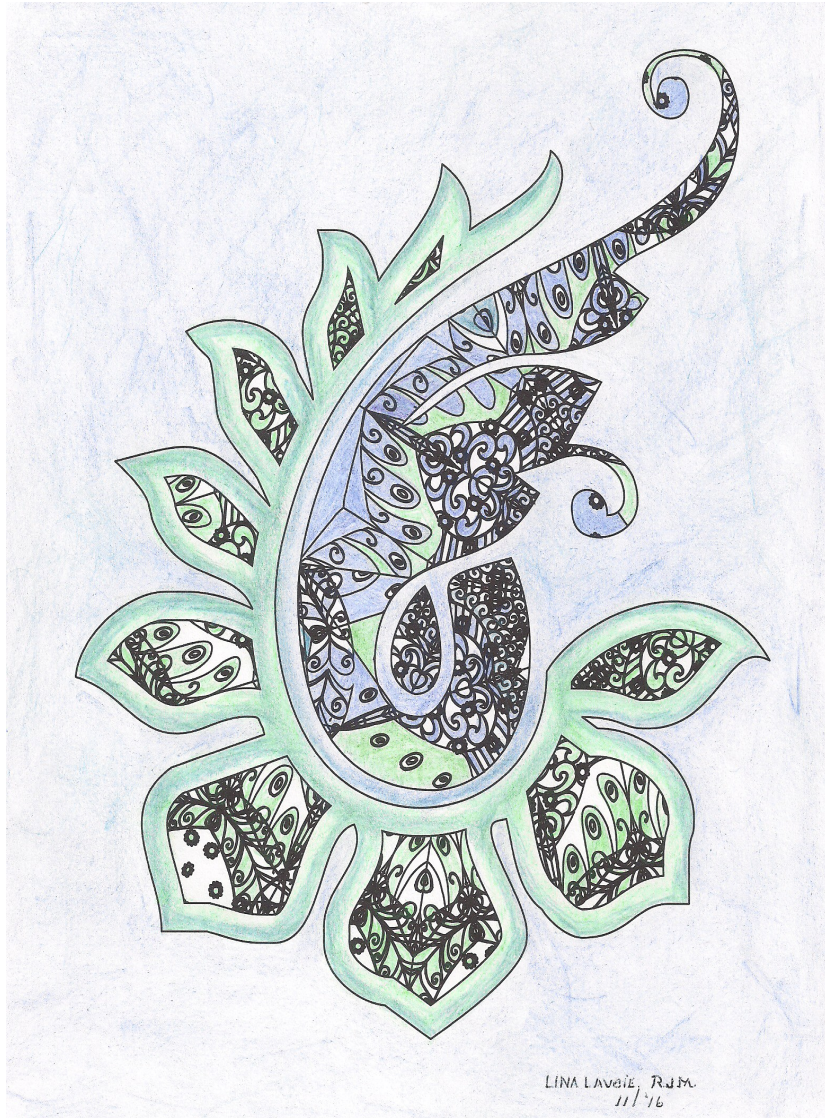
- The Jean Rabel RJM Team

PROVINCE OFFICE

March 20 Next *Bridges* published (articles due by noon Wednesday 3/18)

PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR...

- Michele Higgins, the sister of Sr. Pat Dillon, who began chemotherapy on Monday;
- All the innocent victims of violence in the Middle East and elsewhere around the world;
- Continuing prayers: for the safety and security of the people of Haiti and of our sisters there; Patricia Jones (a dear friend of several RJMs); Edward Stolba (brother of Sr. Janet Stolba) who reports that he is doing well and that it is because of your prayers;
- The repose of the soul of Eleanor Eleanor Martin, the mother of Fr. Jim Martin, SJ, who died 2/26 and for the comfort of her loves ones;
- The repose of the soul of Mary Vitiello, who along with her husband Al are supporters of the Haiti Fund and the parents of Kathy Doggett, a past Quest Volunteer and RJM novice. Mary died 2/24 and we pray for the comfort of her loved ones;
- Madonna Manor (Srs. Michelle Authier and Alice Cote) and Saint Antoine Residence (Sr. Antoinette Jacques), as this week's communities for special prayer.



**WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THE NEEDS OF
OUR RJM SISTERS, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS.**

Praised Forever Be Jesus and Mary