

RELIGIOUS OF JESUS AND MARY

HAITI MISSION NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Haiti,

Times may be tougher than ever in Haiti, but I come to share a spark of hope. In the pages that follow, you will read stories that won't make the evening news or morning newspapers. The articles that follow are firsthand accounts by three RJM missionaries who write directly from Haiti. They are stories of life in Haiti that lie beneath the political, social, and physical chaos.

In late June of 2025, our sisters in Gros Morne returned home. Nevertheless, our mission continued as our Sisters guided and supported projects using cell phones and WhatsApp while providing funding from our RJM Haiti Fund. In May 2026, US RJM Sisters Jackie and Pat returned to Gros Morne for a temporary period to visit our Haitian partners in mission, to shore up leadership, and to work with local leaders to secure the projects in process.



Sr. Rose (an RJM from Ireland) has remained in Jean Rabel, living and working with a team of local leaders. She tells of a vocation retreat on behalf of the RJM Jean Rabel Team. Among the leaders portrayed are young Haitian women who have worked side by side with the RJMs for a number of years. If you take a moment to reflect upon this story of a group of young people – facing the challenges of the physical terrain, playing sports, eating good food while learning about important issues – you might discover that they are just about the same as the kids in your own family or neighborhood. Different challenges? Yes! But kids like any others.

Another spark of hope: on August 8th, Marie Jo Desir, a young Haitian woman who has completed the first stages of formation, will make her first vows as a Religious of Jesus and Mary. Please keep her in prayer.

For the past twenty-eight years, the generous support of many benefactors has sustained the RJM mission in Haiti. Counting on the rising leadership of our Haitian brothers and sisters, we go forward with firm resolve to work in new and creative ways, whether in person or from a distance. We cannot do this work without your financial assistance. Please join in our mission through your generous support.

In Jesus and Mary,

Mary Bourdon, RJM

Mary Bourdon, RJM

US-Haiti Province Leader

Great News from Jesus-Mary Parish School



Students and administrators celebrate winning the Spelling Championship.

Sr. Pat Dillon, RJM

Students are double champions at Jesus-Mary Parish School! The 5th and 6th graders of Jesus-Mary Parish took first place in an eight-school Spelling Championship organized for 2026 in Gros Morne. From the time the students and teachers heard about the spelling contest, they said, "We are going to be Number 1!" The spelling words came from among 3,000 French words. The competition was organized along the lines of the World Cup, with the final match on May 29. Congratulations to all the students and teachers!

On Sunday afternoon, June 7, those fifth and sixth graders won first place again—this time for math, social and experimental sciences, and Creole and French.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/191CYyt45p/> is a short clip of the award at the Lycée (Public High School).

Ten years ago, the Haiti Ministry of Education changed the end of elementary school from sixth grade to ninth grade. This change left our sixth graders in limbo since many could not afford private school. However, when our good friend Father Tony Coote died, the Irish organization, Solèy Ayiti, funded the addition of the junior high classes in his memory.

The third ninth-grade class will take their National Exams at the end of June. Our first ninth-grade class in 2024 had a 100% pass rate, and so did the second graduating class in 2025. Our prayers are with this year's ninth graders—that all will pass and move on to high school.

Our school cannot continue without our RJM Haiti Fund donors. That's you, we pray.

Haitians know what can drastically improve education, and the Model School Network is an excellent answer. The Model School Network is a coalition of Haitian and international partners working to strengthen the quality and governance of Haiti's education system—co-creating education solutions.

Thanks to generous support from the RJM province leadership, Jesus-Mary Parish School is working with the Model School Network to find a Director General (Head of School) so our pedagogical director (academic principal) does not have to deal with lunches, water, the garden, the composting toilets, the library, and the computer lab, etc. This director general will also take over what Sr. Pat has been handling when she returns to the US.

An extremely exciting part of this collaboration is access to the books and materials developed by the Model School Network. Their textbooks and tests are approved by the Ministry of Education. These books have Teacher Guides with them, which most available Haitian textbooks do NOT have! Teacher training on using the books is part of the package.

Despite the horrific conditions in Haiti, Jesus-Mary Parish School children can have a brighter future. Yet, the tuition our families pay covers only a third of the cost of running the school. So please, support our RJM Haiti Fund – an envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. Our children pray for you, and we appreciate your prayers for us, too.

Planting Seeds for Vocations

Sr. Rose Kelly, RJM

Many years ago, Sr. Vivian Patenaude, RJM, set up a group named "Research Vocational". Today, that group is still going, led by two of her former members, Modena and Sherline.

Recently, they had a weekend seminar for nine youngsters in the Fromadou school. Sherline and Modena prepared and supervised the proceedings! Friday afternoon, they had a 45-minute walk to Fromadou, crossing two rivers. The leaders came by motorcycle carrying tanks of water and supplies.

The school staff welcomed them and gave them the use of the school classrooms. Carpets were put down in two of them, sleeping quarters for girls and guys. The other classroom was their meeting room. After a meal cooked by the school cook, they met for orientation and prayer. Afterwards, everyone slept well.

The next morning, after breakfast, Dr. Geralda visited. She spoke on health in general, and then focused on relationships, sexuality, respect for oneself, and for others. There was a group discussion and sharing. Questions were asked and information given. There was an atmosphere of openness and trust. A delicious meal was prepared by the school cook and her assistant. A game of football followed. Then there was the trip for water....no water on tap in these areas! There was no problem in bedding down after prayer.

On Sunday morning, they attended the church service, where they joined in the singing. Many were curious to know who they were and what they were doing in Fromadou...it is not often groups come to this area. One of the young guys explained who they were and that their group was open to anyone. It was time to clear up, thank their hosts, and walk back to Jean Rabel. A very satisfactory time was had by all!



Research General group meets to explore vocations.

Support Temporary Protective Status for Haitians

Sr. Pat Dillon, RJM

Senator Ed Markey (D, MA) just introduced a Temporary Protective Status (TPS) companion bill to Rep. Ayana Pressley's bipartisan bill which passed the House last month. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops have spoken out in favor of this extension (<https://www.usccb.org/news/2026/bishop-chairmen-call-administration-extend-protections-haitians-united-states>) as have many religious communities including the Religious of Jesus and Mary. Please contact your US Senators to co-sponsor Sen. Markey's TPS bill.

You can contact Cecilia Needham cecilia@ijdh.org at the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) for more guidance. The Supreme Court is poised to decide if a lower court's injunction against ending TPS can continue, thus protecting, for now, 350,000 Haitians living here thanks to this designation. RJM's have already signed onto a Friend of the Court Brief. Support, especially bipartisan support for Sen. Markey's bill, could influence the Supreme Court.

Save the Dates: On Sept. 29th and 30th, the Quixote Center is spearheading both in-person and virtual Congressional visits to support the ARMAS Act to help eliminate illegal weapons trafficking, which is a leading cause of people leaving their home countries. Make plans to visit your Congressional legislators. Thanks for working together with us on this issue.



Roger "Tiden" Jean was a faithful worker with the RJMs. Sr. Pat and Sr. Jackie attended his funeral. He will be missed.

Maison Bon Samaritain Update

Sr. Jackie Picard, RJM



Residents share a festive meal at Maison Bon Samaritan.

Since 2001, twenty-two elderly adults and individuals living with mental health challenges have enjoyed the comfort and security of a residence built in part with funds from Food for the Poor and an Irish group associated with University College Dublin. Maison Bon Samaritain (MBS) is staffed by nurses, house-keepers, caregivers, laundry personnel, and cooks. Residents receive two meals each day and are provided with medical care.

Financial and advisory support for these services is provided by the USA-Haiti Province of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, Mercy Focus on Haiti, numerous local Haitian families and community groups, as well as former Gros Morne residents living abroad.

Recently, a Haitian living overseas was celebrating his birthday. With few family members available to share the occasion, he sent funds to the Administrator of MBS and asked her to organize a celebration in his honor.

Videos and photographs from the event show residents singing "Happy Birthday" in both French

and English and enjoying a festive spread of specially prepared food and cold drinks.

Maison Bon Samaritain is not only a recipient of support; it is also a source of service to the wider community. After a newly established local Catholic parish was forced to relocate four times in eight years because it lacked the resources to purchase land and build a permanent church, the pastor approached MBS for assistance. Having celebrated Mass at Maison Bon Samaritain on several occasions—including Christmas, Easter, and other feast days—he asked whether the parish might use the facility for its weekly Sunday Mass. The staff, residents, and administration warmly welcomed the parish community. As a result, MBS became the temporary home of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, and parishioners and residents now share in weekly Sunday Masses and Holy Day celebrations.

The residents of MBS also contribute to the life of the facility. Those who are able help by shelling beans, sweeping the grounds, and assisting with other daily tasks. One resident, displaced by gang violence after losing both his wife and a child who were killed in Port-au-Prince, arrived at MBS in poor health and dependent on medical care following an accident. After undergoing surgery and spending time recovering his strength, he developed an interest in the garden located behind the residence.

Today, that garden produces yams, bananas, spinach, avocados, various types of beans, breadfruit, and even coffee—much to the delight of the residents, who enjoy the fresh produce prepared as part of their meals.

We, the Religious of Jesus and Mary, who have ministered in Gros Morne for the past twenty-eight years, look forward to the day when peace returns to the troubled country of Haiti. We hope once again to welcome volunteers and visitors who can experience firsthand the joy, dignity, and love that flourish at Maison Bon Samaritain.

Volunteers are wanted in the US to assist with fundraising and social media for Haiti. Someday we hope our volunteers will return to Haiti. Contact Kathy Schmitt for more information (kschmitt@rjmusa.org).

If you can, please make a donation today at www.rjmusa.org/donate. You can use the enclosed envelope to mail a tax-deductible check made out to the Religious of Jesus and Mary. Any amount will be helpful in addressing critical needs; just note "RJM Haiti Mission" on your check. To make automatic monthly donations from your checking account or credit/debit card, go to: www.rjmusa.org/donate.