



# SHALOM HAITIAN EDUCATION FUND NEWS

An occasional bulletin to provide information on our partnership with the Office of Education of the Diocese of Hinche, Haiti. It is also available on our website: [www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti)

July 2008

## SISTER MAMOUNE MAURICE VISITS THE DIOCESE

Her first trip outside of Haiti brought Sr. Mamoune Maurice, a Little Sister of St. Thérèse (a Haitian religious community), to Virginia to meet with the Board of Directors of the Haitian Education Fund. Sister Mamoune is the vice president of the Hinche diocesan Committee on Education, which develops policy for the 85 elementary schools and 12 secondary schools of the Diocese of Hinche.

The timing of her visit enabled her to take part in the annual Haiti Gathering of the Diocese of Richmond.



Sr. Mamoune in a small group discussion at the Haiti Gathering. John Clickener, HEF Treasurer, is to her right.

She also had the opportunity to meet with Annette Parsons, chief schools administrator of the Diocese of Richmond, and with the HEF Board, furthering enhancing our solidarity in the ministry of education with the people of the Central Plateau of Haiti.

Sr. Mamoune is also seeking a twinning relationship for Sacre-Coeur secondary school in Papaye of which she is the director. If anyone knows of a parish or school which would be interested in this collaborative relationship, please contact Patrice Schwermer (804-359-5661 or [pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org)).

## VISIT TO MATENWA

While they were in Haiti May 19-30, HEF Board members Patrice Schwermer and Kathy Gross visited the Matenwa Learning Center on the island of LaGonave with diocesan vicar general Fr. Jethro Noel, diocesan education director Richard Joseph, and diocesan education committee's Sr. Mamoune Maurice.

Matenwa is a center sponsored by Beyond Borders, a US non-governmental organization which has introduced some very interesting and innovative educational methods to

Haiti. Founded twelve years ago, it fosters interactive teaching methods. Both the HEF and the Hinche Office of Education are investigating how these might be replicated in the Central Plateau region. They especially liked the way the students participated in the classes and the connection between the school and the garden in which students and teachers grow food for meals. In the light of the current increase in the cost of food in Haiti, each school having its own garden looks like a very good idea!



The teachers from Cerca Carvajal at the Matenwa Learning Center

Recently St. Edward the Confessor Parish in Richmond "sent" all eighteen teachers in their twinning parish of Cerca Carvajal for a visit to Matenwa, and all enjoyed their visit and talking with the teachers there. It was truly an educational experience for them, many of whom had never even traveled to Port-au-Prince, much less the island of LaGonave. St. Edward's Haiti Committee hopes that this will open their minds to new ways of teaching. The Matenwa school offers this service to other teachers at a reasonable cost. For more information, you might contact parishioner and Board member Kathy Gross at [kathyhaiti@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaiti@gmail.com).

## SAD NEWS

We learned last month that the wife of Lafleur Pierrot, a Hinche diocesan supervisor for the Lower Plateau/Laschobas area, died suddenly. They have four school-age children. The members of the HEF Board of Directors are contributing to a scholarship fund for the children.

Education Director Richard Joseph attended the funeral in Laschobas. HEF Board Secretary Br. Cosmas Rubencamp has a vivid memory of Mme. Lafleur very early one morning when he and Richard came by their house before dawn to pick up Lafleur to go to the dedication of the Dos Palais school—she came out to the car with very welcome hot coffee and rolls for them. May she rest in peace, and may her family be comforted.

## WHAT'S THAT MOTORCYCLE FUND?

We have been listing "motorcycle fund" among the ways you can designate your gift to the Haitian Education Fund. What is that all about? We probably haven't explained it in a while, but it is a fund from which from time to time we are able to buy a motorcycle for the use of one of the five school supervisors.

There are 85 elementary schools in the Hinche diocese, and the supervisors usually can reach them by motorcycle, but the roads are so bad [there are only two paved roads in the Central Plateau, and the main highway is not one of them!] that even motorbikes don't last long.

Some schools are accessible only by mule, and the diocesan office has a couple of them—we doubt that any US school system superintendent travels by mule.

So, now you know!

## VISITORS EXPECTED/REJECTED

On June 9<sup>th</sup> diocesan Education Director Richard Joseph returned to Virginia for meetings with our diocesan Sustainable Development Committee and the Board of the Haitian Education Fund [see below].

Unfortunately, the US consulate in Haiti denied tourist visas to his wife Roseline and their 3-year old son Larsen. Richard was hoping that this trip, which was to have been their first time outside of Haiti, would be an opportunity for him to show them our Shenandoah Valley where he spent three summers studying English at Eastern Mennonite University and probably Washington as well.

*Question to ponder: if they were from Canada or any European country would they have been denied a visa?*

## RICHARD JOSEPH MEETS WITH HEF BOARD

On June 12<sup>th</sup> Richard Joseph met with the HEF Board of Directors to share some of the experiences and plans of the Hinche diocesan Committee on Education [comparable to our Catholic School Board] and his office. Here are some highlights.

- The reorganization of the diocesan educational leadership this year has been working very well.
- The new team is placing a heavy emphasis on expanding environmental education and on banning corporal punishment.
- They Education Office sponsored this spring a very productive meeting of the secondary school directors.
- The diocesan educational leadership participated in a national meeting sponsored by the Bishops' Commission for Catholic Education (CEEC), at which was launched a strong effort to unite the diocesan schools with those Catholic schools sponsored by lay and religious groups.
- Efforts are underway to get the unlicensed Catholic schools of the Central Plateau licensed by the government.
- In October the Office of Education received books from the government for the 5th and 6th grades and distributed them to all elementary schools in the diocese.

- This August the educational leadership team (Richard, Fr. Jethro Noel and Fr. Leveque Bien-Aimé) would like to hold two one-day gatherings of priests, principals, teachers and parents—one gathering in Mirebalais and one in the Hinche area—to lay out the new emphases on environmental education and protecting the children from abuse. *[The HEF Board very much encouraged this idea and agreed to raise the funds needed for food for these sessions. If you can help, please see the contribution form in this newsletter. We need about \$1000]*
- Richard recommended that the HEF communicate to the Virginia parishes twinning with Haitian communities which have schools their need for basic school supplies: pens, pencils, backpacks, and funds for purchasing books. Supplies could go down in the next container leaving from Virginia.
- Finally, because the school feeding programs are in jeopardy for next year, The Office of Education will be applying for USAID funds to be administered by two non-governmental organizations in Haiti: World Vision and Catholic Relief Services. [The HEF Board will support their application.]

## TEACHER-TRAINING SESSIONS

Those who have been reading this newsletter—and especially those who have contributed to the project—will recall that over the last three years we funded teacher-training sessions of seven weeks a year, following the Haitian government's curriculum. Fifty-three uncertified teachers participated in these sessions and took the government certification exam last summer.

The results were disappointing, since only seventeen teachers ultimately received governmental diplomas. Another twenty-one scored well enough, however, to receive diocesan certification. Those who were borderline-successful can retake the test next year. Everyone learned a lot from the sessions, and the classroom performance of all fifty-three has improved.

The Hinche educational leaders have been evaluating the sessions and believe that before they offer this training again the applying teachers should take a diagnostic test so that the sessions can be better structured to meet their needs.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO HAITI

Applications are now being taken for the diocesan immersion retreat trip to Haiti November 29 through December 6, 2008. The trip is designed for individuals to be immersed into Haitian history, culture, economics, politics and religion and to begin establishing relationships with the people of Haiti.

*This is not a tourist visit but a pilgrimage, the carving out in our lives of a holy space and a time to be open to the gifts of Haiti and the transformation of God.*

For an application and more information please call or email Patrice Schwermer at 804-622-5129 or [pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org).

# SHALOM/HAITIAN EDUCATION FUND CONTRIBUTORS

July 2007-June 2008

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## Haitian Education Fund

I am enclosing a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (please make check payable to *Catholic Diocese of Richmond*). I would like to designate it for (please check one):

- Improving the schools—this month, the emphasis will be support for the one-day sessions for teachers and principals
- Support for the Hinche diocesan Office of Education, including supervisors who visit parish schools
- Endowment Fund (long-range support for future projects)
- Motorcycle Fund (purchase of motorcycles for supervisors)

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