



A monthly newsletter to report on developments of the Volunteer Ministries in Haiti, a program of the Xaverian Brothers' supported by the Diocese of Richmond. Further information is available from the Haitian Ministry Commission, Diocese of Richmond, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond VA 23294 (telephone: 804-359-5661) (fax: 804-358-9159) (e-mail: pschwermer@richmonddiocese.org) (website: [www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti/hat111.htm](http://www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti/hat111.htm))

## LETTER FROM BROTHER HARRY ECCLES

GOOD NEWS--There is life after 80! Now into the second month of my 81<sup>st</sup> and still shuffling along. I use the motorcycle taxis more than my bike, and I rely on a handrail or shoulder for going downstairs. (Willing shoulders are easier to find than handrails!)

I'LL GIVE CREDIT TO vitamin pills, but the best energizer is the liveliness all around me. Infectious!

MARCH 31<sup>st</sup> I said goodbye to Deacon Mike Johnson, Mike Kassel, and Katherine Feltner, from St. Mark Parish, Virginia. Beach. The previous Saturday Katrina Kissman (Penn State alum) and her friend Ilsa Leon returned to their med studies at Temple University. Their week-long visit was a great gift, and I am sure that I'll see most of them before the year is over. Like other visitors, they entered into the life of the orphanage: teaching English, learning Kreyòl, playing games and sports, going with me to Mass at the cathedral, visiting the Missionaries of Charity refuge for malnourished children and incapacitated adults (the Azil), sharing kitchen chores, etc. "Lively" doesn't do justice to their energy. Mèsi, Bondye, mèsi!!!!

MOTHER NATURE has been lively, too, with an early (and very welcome) start on the rainy season. It's not yet the real thing, but we have had to use the squeegee. It will be several weeks before the mangos are ripe, but they are getting bigger, and we have an impressive cabbage patch, too. Nights I've used a blanket; morning and evening a sweater.

AMONG OUR VISITORS but not really a visitor, was Br. Mike McCarthy, taking a break from his orientation at the Scalabrini seminary. Part of his motive in coming to Hinche is to explore ministries possibilities for next year. I tell him the possibilities are limitless, but he's checking out the scene before deciding. His number-one job, of course, will be looking after me! And he's already going full-steam with computer and calculator skills in planning budgets for our Xaverian community, as well as for the young men at *Sant Zaveryen* and other non-resident clients. Bro. Mike and I go back to 1970 when we were on the faculty of Xaverian High in Brooklyn and later to his services while at Xaverian Brothers HQ in Baltimore. His presence in Haiti is a priceless gift. Mèsi, Bondye.

GETTING WEARY OF THE HEARTS AND FLOWERS? Well with all the flowers, there are the thorns. It's always a challenge to share the flowers with people whose lives are so much more limited than mine, even while I'm in Haiti. We try to help people attend school, realizing that an education doesn't guarantee them a decent life. (Three new doctors who lived at the Sant are unemployed.) I'm convinced, though, that education in the full sense of the word is the best hope for Haiti. The number of eager students who come to our English classes says that Haitians also see education as their salvation. Yesterday Bro. Mike and I went to St. Martin de Porres Secondary School for an English class that I had missed for several weeks because of holidays, exams, and my travels. The students met on their own, and they had a colorful "Welcome Back" sign on the wall. Teacher appreciation isn't just an annual observance in Haiti. Meanwhile, it's not easy to be patient, especially lately with increasing costs for school, food, and tap-tap (bus) travel. The folk we help are the fortunate ones, but even they feel the sting, the bite. *Klowoks* (Clorox) and battery acid are new words they use to describe life in Haiti. Yes, our clients are fortunate, and you are God's agents in dispensing the blessing of education. May God bless you and yours as He blesses us through you. Alelouya! Alelouya! Alelouya!

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## LETTER FROM THÉONY DESHOMMES

*We continue with our series of letters from the young men who either are currently living at the Sant Zaveryen (Xaverian Center) in Port-au-Prince, or did live there while studying at one of the local universities or professional schools. Théony is a fourth year medical student at the State University of Haiti.*

Since 2004 I have been living in the *Sant Zaveryen*, where I am able to know Jesus better through my brothers. My life is very simple. I always wake up at 2:00 a.m., pray, go to the bathroom, brush my teeth and wash my face and begin to study. At 5:00 a.m. it is time for our community prayer, which usually takes about a half-hour, and it is like the first breath of a new-born baby. Just after the prayer, we have breakfast in our small dining room. Here

is an obligation for us to speak English and to talk to each other or to tell jokes, very funny. After that I always take one more hour to sleep, and when I wake up it is time to prepare myself to go to class.

At 7:00 my life at school begins. Everyday I have external rotation at the hospital of Saint François de Sales from 9:30 a.m. to noon, and at 1:00 p.m. class begins again at the University. So you could understand that some days I don't even have time to eat. At 5:00 p.m., class is done and it's time for me to try to review all the stuff and to do some research on the internet.

On Friday after class, it's time for me to wash clothes, though normally in the house we do that on Saturday, just after the big meeting of the week--oh! It is another very interesting time that we have together when we are washing together and telling jokes, laughing together or singing like a very good choir.

On Sunday we go to church and in the afternoon do our community service, working with those in the neighborhood that need help on some subjects such as math, chemistry, physics, and so on. Those who are in medical school (Martineau, Chartelain and I) go to the nearby orphanage to take blood pressure, give some injections, or play with the children or feed them.

I am not only a "small doctor" but also a good cook. In the *Sant* we have rotation for that and it is always a pleasure for us to do it and to do our best so that it can be tasty.

The streets are secure now in Port-au-Prince, but sometimes when Br. Harry is back we have tachycardia, because of the insecurity he is experiencing in finding money to keep us going! In the house we have a team of four people: coordinator, housekeeper, procurator and a treasurer. I am the treasurer, and each month I need to give a report to Br. Harry, and it is a mix of joy and pain to see a 80-year old man leave his country and his family so that the *Sant* can survive and enable many others to be able to have a better life in the future.

Yesterday, I was talking to my friend Loulou, who said to me "A lot of people in the U.S. could have a much better life, such as go to the movies, go to the beach, buy some luxury car, just for fun, but they decided to do the contrary just for us, without even knowing us. What God will do for these people?"

At the beginning of my letter I said, we have the opportunity to find something to eat twice a day, but things are getting very expensive in the country. They say that it is not only in Haiti, but also in the U.S. All the good Haitians know, however, that the "bourgeois" are raising prices to destabilize our state government which is loved and protected by the masses. Now they call the misery which is hurting every one in the society "Clorox" or bleach in English. I heard that some people are dying in the countryside because of that. So if one day one of you says that he will not give some money this month or give less what will happen to us?

We would like to thank you for the inverter. We spent two months without having electricity to study, but now we do not have this problem.

We would like to thank you also for the chance that you always give to those who are in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year of medical school to have medical books, to go to school, and also to travel for external practice for a month.

Last month, one of our brothers, Renan Anglade Joseph, had a problem of infection, and at first we thought that it was an orchitis or hydrocele, and was going to be in need of major surgery, but thanks to almighty God and through your and our prayer he is ok after taking the medicine.

I apologize because it has taken me so long to send this letter; it is because I have a lot of trouble seeing well. My glasses have needed to be changed for the past 20 months but there has been no possibility. I know that God is acting for me and he will continue to bless you too! "Thank you" is a very simple expression with just two syllables but it translates a lot of feelings of gratitude coming from the depth of our heart.

## FROM THE EDITOR

*In our January newsletter, readers may remember that Br. Harry forwarded, with his endorsement, the following request from two of the young men at the Sant. Originally the program was to have taken place during the Easter vacation. It has been postponed until May 14-17, but we still have not been able to raise the funds required for them to attend. Br. Harry requested us to repeat the appeal:*

"We, Accilien, Gelin and Camil Canes, students at the Xaverian Center, have opportunity to attend a seminar of formation that will last four days in the Dominican Republic. The seminar will cover:

- SYSTEMATIZATION IN MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (*systematisation en gestion de projet de developpement communautaire*)
- STRATEGIC PLANNING (*planification strategique*)
- ORGANISATIONAL REINFORCEMENT.

"There will be other interesting activities like visiting some specials projects.

"But, in order for us to take part in this program, which will help us know more and share with the other when we're back, we need \$1,500.

"We hope that will please you and interest you in helping us to participate.

"Thanks for your help. God bless you."

*If any of our readers can help these young men attend this seminar, please mark your check's note line Seminar Support and send it in the enclosed envelope.*