



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@richmonddioocese.org) (website: www.richmonddioocese.org/haiti/hat111.htm)

LETTER FROM BROTHER HARRY ECCLES

THOSE OF YOU even slightly adept in the use of e-mail would laugh at the time and frustration that has gone into this newsletter piece!

I'M WRITING from the Orphanage Guest House, a new possibility made possible by a group from Randolph-Macon College. They came to give a mini-course in computer concepts to the boys, and the program was fascinating, though more comprehensible to the boys than to me! In their free time, the visitors installed a wireless connection between the computer lab and the guest house. Needless to say, I was and am happy. But if something can go wrong.... I began to write when we didn't have internet connection; I do have some notion about stored files, but taking my best-ever [no one can prove otherwise] letter from My Recent Documents to e-mail was a hurdle I couldn't get over. I did succeed in making an e-mail connection, only to find that the computer wouldn't accept it for fear of a virus. So here I am, controlling my frustration rather well, and still happy and grateful for what Ben Burrell and his team of faculty and students accomplished. They even activated our Skype, but that's another skill I have to learn! Just send me a patient teacher, a very patient teacher!

ALTHOUGH THE R-MC visit was short, it was well focused, and the students spent some time playing football with the boys. More than that, they made time to visit the Azil, a refuge for malnourished children and adults not able to care for themselves. The Azil is run by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity. One visit wasn't enough for some of the group, and after accompanying them the first time, I found myself returning with them to help, feed, to play with, or simply to hold some of the children. No big deal as far as it goes until a child cries when it's time to say goodbye. But it's worth it! Probably no Azil where you live, but you may be sure that there is an equivalent. A good way to meet Jesus as we prepare to celebrate his resurrection after these 40 days of Lent.

THANKS BE TO GOD, not everyone needs the services of the Azil, and these days many people are enjoying Màdigra, or Mardi Gras, or Pancake Tuesday. Not the splashy celebration of New Orleans, but traditionally the government and businesses put money into the event, and the town square has four bandstands. Remote preparations began weeks ago, and most schools are closed all week. Of course, music is the soul of the celebration, but there's a Halloween aspect too: some dress up in bird-like costumes mad from old papers. (I sacrificed some of my "not-quite-

finished” papers and magazines to the festivities.)The "birds" make menacing gestures, it doesn't seem to be a trick-or-treat affair. You would hope so if you met those costumed in mud or old motor oil! One of my students observed that Màdigra is like the "bread and circuses" the Roman Empire used to give the downtrodden as some respite from harsh realities.

THE WEATHER IS ALWAYS A TOPIC for comment, and deservedly so when you see 55 on the thermometer. We're not used to that, and I'm glad that we have some blankets on hand. The cold is only for nights and early mornings, and one effect is to find Good Counsel High School and Mt. St. Joseph High School athletic wear. Reminders of these Xaverian Brothers Sponsored Schools are a touch of home for me. By the time the sun has warmed us to a pleasant 80, the boys are flying kites made from tattered pieces of paper. They are resourceful!

THE DAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY I'll go to Port-au-Prince to visit the young men at the Sant Zaveryen. In between visits, we keep in touch by e-mail, but my next visit will be special because it is our weekend to remember Bro.Phil Eisenhaur, who started the Sant in 1996, and left it shortly afterwards for you and me to keep it going. Some differences between then and now are more students and higher costs. We need you!!

BEFORE I WRITE MY NEXT LETTER, I'll have become an octogenarian. The Bible allots 80 years to those who are strong, so what am I doing here? I'm encouraged by so many others of you who show me that there is indeed life after 80. Thank you!

THESE PRE-EASTER days give me a chance to repeat my encouragement to read James Martin's MY LIFE WITH THE SAINTS. I'm not the only one to find it a treasure.

May these days of Lent find us closer to one another and closer to Jesus as we meet him in those who need us.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A short edition this time. The letter from one of the guys at the Sant needed "major surgery" according to Brother Harry, so it will appear in March!

In the meantime, recruiting season for 2008-2009 volunteers is upon us. We have completed the interview process with one candidate and two other possibilities are in the "pipeline", making it more likely that we will have volunteers in Haiti again next year.