



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 MICHAEL McCARTHY

*While Brother Harry is in the States for a brief vacation and to participate in the orientation and commissioning of our volunteers, Br. Mike is a "guest contributor" to the newsletter.*

"It All Happens under a Mighty Mango Tree."

From my limited experience and time in Haiti, I've come to believe that mango trees are ubiquitous in this country. Besides the more than a hundred different varieties of textures and flavors in the fruits these trees produce, they also provide much coveted shade that attracts many activities of the Haitian people.

My first experience was in December at the orphanage in Hinche--we gathered under the enormous tree that shades the dining room. It was under the protection of its huge, blossoming branches that we celebrated Christmas liturgy, enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by the Missionaries of Charity, and for me, spent my first "Fèt Nwèl" in Haiti.

While I was studying Kreyòl and staying with the Scalabrini Fathers and Brothers outside of Port-au-Prince, I often accompanied a second year philosophy student, Frisinel Joseph, on Sundays as he proclaimed the Word at the chapel of the Holy Trinity, a 25-minute walk from the seminary. It was in this chapel that the neighborhood gathered for worship that included the rosary, listening to the scriptures followed by Frisinel's homily and a communion service. Frisinel kept his reflections short because as the morning advanced, the sun quickly warmed the roofless chapel. The blue tarps that protected the 100 or so of us who gathered flapped in the breeze. After the service, the next part of the community gathering took place--under the mighty mango tree that graced the property! It was there that the 'sacristan'--the man who actually leads the community, conducted the weekly parish meeting. By this time the 'chapel' was stifling; the mango shade protected the thirty or so parishioners who gathered sitting on their cinderblock-supported benches that had

been carried from inside. During these months the maturing fruit was very visible on every branch.

My third experience of being gifted by the mighty mango took place in the neighborhood that surrounds the seminary in Croix-des-Bouquets, where I teach English to a group of neighbors from an alternative Christian community of lay folks who share prayer, service and their lives together. Class begins at 11:00 in the morning--guess where? Yes, we gather with the blackboard resting on two chairs, leaning against an immense mango tree. The five of us enjoy the shade and the lovely morning breezes. As spring has arrived, we now share the space with an abundance of the mature fruit, many of which fall during the class. The new mothers in the area proudly enter the yard, followed by a young mother goat with her twins, a mother duck with her seven ducklings, a mother dog with her three puppies and a hen with her three chicks. Happily the baby pigs enter and leave on their own!

Haiti is people gathering outside. It is there that they cook, eat, meet, pray and study. They share their space with family, neighbors and many animals that are part and parcel of their life here. They also make room for many people who visit, some for a week or two, or others like the Xaverian Brothers Volunteers who come for a year. Right now in Hinche, Bro. Harry and Jean-Louis and the 100 residents at the orphanage are waiting for the arrival of the newest, Katie Gordon. They'll first meet--under a mango tree!

"Collaboration is the Name of the Game"

My mother used to tell us that "many hands made light work." Such wisdom is also epitomized in the Haitian proverb: "men anpil, chay pa lou"--with many hands the load isn't heavy. We all know that the challenges we face in Haiti are virtually insurmountable, definitely impossible if we try to face them alone.

I'm constantly amazed at the partnership that exists between parishes in the Diocese of Richmond and those of Hinche. Through the generous and tireless dedication of so many committed folks in the Old Dominion, thousands of children study and eat in the parish

schools here on the Central Plateau. Teachers are paid; teacher training workshops are sponsored. Clinics are constructed; doctors and nurses paid. Lives are touched both in this Caribbean country, and in many churches and homes in the extended Richmond community. Many hands are joined across the miles.

On Brother Harry's refrigerator (yes, he has one—run by gas—that he uses only when guests or volunteers are present!) are pictures of the Xaverian Volunteers who went to Pandiassou for a year of spirituality, community and outreach to the rural Haitian people. Their experienced hands introduced many a young Haitian to the wonders of a computer, to the excitement of basketball, and to the confidence-building that results from increased skills in math, agronomy and English. Something magical has happened over the years in the relationships they established; so many return with their parents, spouses or college friends. Jonathan Dohanich and Mike McGeehin will be visiting this summer. The faces of the kids at the orphanage come alive when the opened gate welcomes a volunteer from the past. Extended hands meet in many a warm embrace.

This July we'll have a new form of collaboration on the Plateau when eleven students from the Scalabrini seminary conduct a month's enrichment program for the Maison Fortuné residents. These Haitian seminarians will offer each youngster an hour of math, reading and catechism skills each day during July. The older fellows will study algebra, French, physics and an introduction to chemistry and Spanish. Each day will begin with prayer, songs and Haitian fun *under the enormous mango tree* by the dining room. Now the hands extended to the young guys at the orphanage belong to their fellow-Haitians, philosophy students on their road to being missionary priests.

Jesus assures us that all things are possible with God, and our joining hands in so many different collaborative configurations make a few of God's miracles ever more tangible. May God continue to bless our efforts and all who contribute to them.

## LETTER FROM RENAN JOSEPH

*We continue with our series of letters from the young men from rural Haiti living at the Sant Zaveryen while studying at universities in Port-au-Prince*

I was born in Haiti's Artibonite Department where I grew up and went to school from the kindergarten through secondary school. To come to the Xaverian Center in 2005 was a very good thing for me. Since then I have always been happy with my experience with my brothers here. This is where also I have learned to know Jesus better, to live in community, to cook, and so on. In 2005, after I finished school, I left my country side to go to Port-au-Prince so that I could go to a university. The first university that I was in did not have a good sys-

tem at all. This is the reason right I left it and lost one year. The next year I went to the ISRSS, the Higher Institute for Research in Social Science. I'm studying political sciences and I'm in the first year. I will finish with my last exam at the end of July, and in September I will begin my second year.

The political science that I'm studying is tied up with the philosophy, political philosophy. Now I'm taking course in diplomacy so that when I am finished in 2011 I will have a specialty.

It would be a big mistake if I finished without thanking you. So, I say thanks to every one of you. Thanks because you accept to share what you have with us.

Thanks because you contribute to our lives and our success. I tell you the truth: without God and you, our success would be difficult. Don't give up the work that you are doing for God. We pray for you so that God will bless all of you and your family wherever you are.

## VOLUNTEER NEWS

We are happy to announce that we will have three volunteers going to Haiti this summer.

Two of them will be sponsored by the Maison Fortuné Orphanage Foundation for a short-term summer volunteer period.

**Ilsa Leon**, a graduate of the University of North Carolina, just finished her first year of medical school at Temple University in Philadelphia, and she will be in Haiti June 24-July 30.

**Peter Everest**, from Oklahoma City, is an undergraduate at Colorado College, and he will be there from July 5<sup>th</sup> through mid-August.

**Caitlin (Katie) Gordon**, our *Xaverian Brothers Volunteer Program* volunteer will be going for a year following her orientation and commissioning on July 5. She and Peter will travel to Haiti with Brother Harry Eccles, who will participate in their week-long orientation sessions in Marriottsville, Maryland.

Katie is a 2008 graduate of the University of Tampa, and comes from Virginia Beach, where her family is a member of the Catholic Church of St. Mark. She was at the orphanage on a Spring Break trip, and is delighted to be going back for a year's service. So are we!

We'll get Katie to write monthly reports on her experience once she gets settled in.