



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

ANOTHER JAM-PACKED MONTH, and the next promises to be the same. I'll be in the States from early June until July 6. At least, that's my plan. My return is linked to the beginning of the Xaverian Brothers Volunteer Program. The orientation for new volunteers starts on June 26, and the Commissioning is set for July 5. Bro. Jim Connolly is coordinating the program, and recent headlines from Haiti have made his job difficult. Not too long ago, we had four volunteers lined up and a few more on the waiting list. Understandable concerns of applicants and their families have brought the optimum four down to a one and a maybe! We'll see what the next weeks bring.

FOR MY PART, after almost 19 years in Haiti, I have experienced only one anxious moment, when the illegal military regime several years ago brought me in for questioning. There was no real danger then, and there is less now, with a responsible government and the UN on the scene. Yes, there have been six deaths reported in the capital, at least one of which accidental. If you look carefully at the news photos, you won't see more than a dozen people engaged in the "turmoil," and the word is that they were hired to put on a show. And in Hinche it was a "show" that was largely unnoticed: black marks at the intersections where a few tires were burned.

I SAY THIS NOT TO PURSUADE but to reassure. There is no need at all to be concerned about me, nor about anyone coming to Haiti. Leave your flak jacket in the attic!

WHAT IS BOTHERSOME is the theatrics of the situation. There are people who are investing in the destabilization of this poor country. The wheelers and dealers have used the current worldwide economic situation as an opportunity to hike prices unconscionably--and then paid demonstrators to portray a frightening condition which does not exist.

SOUNDS ABSURD, but that's Haiti's history. The real power in Haiti thrives on unsettled conditions.

OH, YES, there are other factors. This time the government wasn't ready to deal with the manufactured crisis, so now we have a new prime minister.

OH, YES, TOO, the plight of the really poor is real, but not because the price of rice or bus fare has doubled. The really poor can't even pay "normal" prices.

WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS Haiti does have, there are no racial (tribal) or religious divisions. The exploitation of the poor for the benefit of the power brokers is more than enough.

MY HOPE AND CONVICTION is that working with the folk at the bottom of the pile, we are helping the average Haitian to build a country not so likely to be wasted by selfishness and fear. END OF TIRADE!

LIFE GOES ON with its seasonal changes. I tense up sometimes when I see the boys climbing mango trees, but Haiti's best product everywhere evident, and in Pandiasou my team has started to dry mangos. More than that, the mango seedlings from last season are ready for planting, and the rain gives them good hope for surviving. The rain is such a blessing that I don't mind manning a squeegee when the wind sometimes drives the rain into the hall.

MY ENGLISH CLASSES of varying levels are full, and we've been blessed by visiting professors, Susan Pleasants and David Whitehead from Virginia most recently. Saturday morning we fill two classrooms, with Noë guiding the beginners. Noë has also become a frequent visitor at the Azil, sometimes with other boys--the ripple effect! Yesterday he and I caught the little ones' attention with a very soft beach ball. It doesn't take much. From my second-floor porch, I can see work on the girls' orphanage on the right, and on the left a football field is replacing the rock-strewn campus.

IN PORT-AU-PRINCE at the Sant Zaveryen the young men have initiated changes in their already-Spartan life, and we're looking ahead to higher tuition and living costs. Yes, life goes on, and for the folk I share my life with, life is better because of your help. You are making a difference in the rebuilding of Haiti. God bless you and reward you for your generosity! I hope to see many of you as I bounce from place to place over the next several weeks. Meanwhile, may our risen Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

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## LETTER FROM BROTHER MICHAEL McCARTHY

I'm ending a visit with Bro. Harry at the Maison Fortuné orphanage in Hinche, a second extended visit here since I arrived in Haiti in September. I enjoy so much the break from my life outside of Port-au-Prince, and I thank God for all the blessings I experience here:

- for the beauty of the billowing clouds gathering in the afternoon announcing the beginning of the rainy season and providing the opportunity for the majority of people here in Hinche to begin their planting;
- for the faith of the people expressed in prayer, song and gesture as they gather for morning liturgy at the cathedral in the center of town;
- for the generator, the pump and abundant water here at the orphanage;
- for the energetic presence of the 100 residents here as they play, study and grow up together in the security of all that is provided to them each day;
- for the marvel of technology that connects John-Louis and the others with so many faithful Board members, visitors, and benefactors from various parts of the world;
- for the generosity of the Xaverian volunteers who are now planning for their missionary year here at Maison Fortuné beginning in July;
- for the faithful presence and example of Bro. Harry, who in his 80<sup>th</sup> year of life and 19<sup>th</sup> here in Haiti, inspires us all with his untiring dedication and service;
- for the presence of the Missionaries of Charity and their outreach to the elderly, sick and abandoned at their Azil Center in town.

I also dream of possessing a magic wand and having the ability to change many of the difficult realities I see here in Haiti.

- I'd return the now-barren mountains of this country into the former splendor of forested hills, thus stopping the serious erosion and the contamination of the rivers with earth and garbage.
- I'd create food banks and nutrition/parenting classes, thus eliminating the need for the second floor at the Azil that serves the severely malnourished and abandoned infants and toddlers.
- I'd create employment opportunities for the many very bright young men and women who live with little hope of developing their potential as productive, contributing citizens of this country.
- I'd open teacher training centers and flood the schools with creative, well supplied teachers who would challenge the naturally bright and curious youngsters here.
- I'd relieve the women of the heavy burden they carry in eking out a living to support their family's needs of food, clothing, tuition.
- I'd remedy the economic situation that is choking the people with rocketing increases in food and transportation prices. (In one month a sack of rice has increased

from \$18 to \$31, and the orphanage requires 14 bags each week; gas in Hinche is now \$7 a gallon, and the generator consumes 30 gallons each week.)

Yes, Haiti is a contagious mixture of blessings and miseries, epitomized everyday in "National Geographic" snapshots of people struggling to survive in the harsh realities that make this country, once the Pearl of the Antilles, now the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Maison Fortuné stands as a sign of hope, offering security and opportunity to over 100 boys, and very soon to a number of young girls.

## FROM THE EDITOR

At the annual Haiti Gathering of the diocese of Richmond, one of the speakers was **Nick McCann**, Xaverian Volunteer in Haiti 2006-2007. Nick is now the assistant project manager for the University of Notre Dame's Haiti Program. At the breakout session which he led, he explained UND's program to eliminate the disease of filariasis in Haiti. The program is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and works in cooperation with the World Health Organization and the Haitian government's Ministry of Health.



Haitian Health Care Foundation Board member Dr. Greg Pudhorodsky with Nick McCann before the latter's presentation at the Richmond diocesan Haiti Gathering.

This month will also see former Xaverian Volunteers in Haiti **Brian Gross** and **Jonathan Dohanich** graduating from Harvard University Law School and the Virginia Tech Veterinary School respectively. Brian will be working with a Washington DC law firm (after he passes the bar exam this summer, of course) and Drs. Jonathan and Leanna Dohanich will be working in a Rappahannock County, Virginia, small and large animal veterinary practice, while they await the birth of their first child! Congratulations to all!

As Brother Harry's letter mentioned, we do have one person committed to serve as a volunteer Haiti for 2008-2009. **Caitlin (Katie) Gordon** will be serving with Br. Harry at the orphanage in Hinche. She is from St. Mark's Parish in Virginia Beach, and has just graduated from the University of Tampa. More about her next month.