

Template for Developing a Haiti Twinning Relationship

1. Decision to Twin - A Diocese of Richmond (DOR) parish makes a decision to twin; a Diocese of Hinche (DOH) parish makes a similar decision and submits a Twinning Questionnaire to the DOR.
2. Approval of a Twinning Partnership - The Associate Director of the DOR Office of Justice and Peace, in collaboration with the DOR Twinning Committee, considers possible twinning relationships and decides on a suitable match.

Establishing Communication - Since the foundation of twinning is the relationship developed between the two parishes, it is highly recommended that the first step be to establish communication between the DOR parish and the DOH parish. This should begin with email communication and an exchange of information about the two parishes. If the DOH parish does not have access to email, information can be exchanged through regular mail, but mail is very slow (typically three months to receive an answer). Sometimes small packages or letters can be dropped off at your parish in Haiti by other twinning groups passing through. E-mail may not be as quick as we expect if the Haitian pastor is depending on a cyber café and the uncertainties of electricity availability in Haiti. Many DOH twinned parishes have found it beneficial to acquire satellite access for their DOH twin parish.

Relationships should not begin with a discussion of money, but communicating challenges your parish may have (especially if it is very small or financially constrained) might be helpful. Parishes that have financial limitations have many other gifts that they can give. Listening, learning to know one another, building a spiritual life together, will provide the foundation for all twinned parishes to move forward together.

3. Parish orientation - Since the goal of twinning is to benefit both parishes it is important to hold a well-publicized orientation for the entire parish (including the pastor, deacons, and the parish council) to introduce the new ministry.
4. Haitian Pastor Visits - The first step in developing a twinning relationship is to invite the pastor of the DOH parish to visit the DOR parish. This is important for several reasons:
 - It establishes face to face communication between the two parishes and lays the foundation for future communication
 - Face to face dialog begins to solidifies the twinning relationship
 - The Haitian pastor's presence at parish liturgies, meetings and special receptions exposes the new Haiti Ministry to parishioners beyond the Haiti Committee.

If the Haitian pastor is unable to make a visit early in the relationship, the Haiti Twinning Committee may want to proceed with plans to visit to their twinned parish (see below). Many concerns and questions of the Parish and Haiti

Committee can be addressed by making a visit, and the relationship can proceed with much greater confidence, understanding and excitement.

5. Pilgrimage to Haiti - After the Haitian pastor's visit, the DOR parish begins to plan a trip to Haiti to visit the twinned DOH parish. Consider these trips as pilgrimages. Participants should be personally moved to participate. The traveling team should be prepared on a spiritual and practical level through a series of pre-trip meetings. A well-formed community travels with the attitude of a pilgrim, open to individual personal transformation. It is important to avoid our natural cultural tendency to find and fix problems, even problems we could not possibly fully understand.
6. Purpose of Visits - The greatest benefit that can come from this exchange of visits is that both parishes experience an increase of HOPE as they intentionally choose to walk down a difficult road together. The visit is an opportunity to explore the gifts and the needs of each parish.
7. Twinning with the Parish vs Twinning with the Priest - In your letter to your DOH priest regarding your upcoming visit, it might be a good idea to state your desire to meet with the Parish Council and other committees within the church, the school, etc., so that a relationship can begin with not only the priest, but the people as well.
8. Cultural Differences on Accountability - As communication continues and the relationship begins to develop, specific projects may be identified:
 - It is very important to allow the DOH twin to tell the DOR twin what their needs are rather than the DOR thinking they know what is needed and how to get things done. The people of Haiti know what is needed in Haiti and we must listen to them carefully.
 - If money is involved it is important to establish a mechanism for the DOH parish to report back to the DOR parish how funds are actually spent. But be forewarned that agreeing to a common understanding of how funds will be budgeted and how the DOH parish will report on the use of funds they receive is a touchy and difficult subject for the DOH parish.
 - There are major cultural differences to bridge here. Haitians are not used to the planning, budgeting and reporting requirements that we take for granted. The DOR parish needs to be culturally sensitive to this. We need to understand that planning, budgeting and reporting are not a natural part of a culture that rarely has the financial resources to look past next week (or even tomorrow). In addition, Haitians consider gifts as just that, a freely given gift with no strings attached. Americans consider funds given for a particular purpose to be restricted to that purpose. If Haitians are asked to account for the funds given for a project they may very well feel that their American partner does not trust them. This quickly becomes, for the Haitians, a matter of personal dignity.
 - The DOR parish must communicate, in as sensitive a way as possible, that parishioners who contribute funds for these projects will not continue to provide these funds unless they receive back the financial accountability

they expect. Experience suggests that it is best to address this issue early in the twinning relationship and create clear expectations.

9. Basic Projects - Experience suggests that there is often a natural progression in the types of projects worked on in a twinning relationship:
 - Haitian parishes and parishioners are materially impoverished and often do not have the basic infrastructure needed by their parish. For example, there may not be a rectory or a church in adequate repair or even electricity. Depending on the condition and age of the parish, the pastor may identify needs of this kind as priorities.
 - Haitians value education and health care. The next levels of needs identified are often things like a school, a clinic, or a water project to provide potable water for the people in the area.
 - When parishes have schools they often will need operating funds (for teacher's salaries, books, supplies, etc.). Many children come to school without having eaten a meal. It is difficult to learn on an empty stomach, so a feeding program may be a priority. A Student Sponsorship Program is a practical way for your parish to support a school financially.

10. Sustainable Development Projects - Once some of these basic needs are met the ideas of both parishes can turn more to sustainable kinds of projects. "Sustainable" projects are those that can sustain themselves both economically (without on-going external financial support) and environmentally (without doing harm to the environment). Sustainable projects help the people of Haiti provide for themselves the basic necessities of life rather than depending on the charity of others. Including sustainable development thinking in the parish's twinning strategy respects the inherent dignity of our Haitian brothers and sisters who currently live in survival mode from one day to the next.

Some examples of sustainable development projects are the Heifer Project, businesses built around computers, sewing machines, baking equipment or health care and training for people for jobs that already exist in the area. FONKOZE micro-business training and micro-loan programs as well as DOH Caritas programs are useful assets. Programs to improve agricultural practices or to promote reforestation can also be examples of sustainable development projects.

NOTE: The DOR parish and Haitians themselves ultimately want Haitians to be able to provide for themselves. So even in the early stages of twinning, when parishes may be focused on basic needs, it is important to keep the idea of sustainability in mind. The DOR Twinning Committee and the DOR Sustainable Development Committee can be a guide and resource to parishes as they begin to twin and through out the twinning relationship.

*See Twinning and Sustainable Development Guidelines - attached

Sept 07