

The Haitian Project, Inc.

Community Update: Hard Work is in Our Charism

August 31, 2011



Last weekend I had the opportunity to join our Portland, OR community at the Madeleine Parish Dinner. It was a great event. I was grateful to have the opportunity to thank the Madeleine parishioners and Fr. Mike Biewend for the incredible work they have done raising support for the students of Louverture Cleary School. Having raised \$250,000 in the past 11 years through the Parish Garage Sale along with other parish activities and the now established Parish Dinner, there was a lot for which to say THANK YOU. We also had the joy of debuting our new video about the Timoun Program. Thank you to Michelle Carlisle Lee, a young professional film maker, for offering so much time and talent to create the video. The Madeleine Parish Dinner is now one of three regional events in the country where we have the opportunity to recognize the dedication and work that comes from so many volunteers in The Haitian Project community. On Saturday we offered an award recognition to Jack Talbott, who has brought an incredible

amount of resources, support, and engineering expertise to THP for more than a decade. We also recognized Sally Kirchoff, who received the same award many years ago before the regional event was established. Sally's incredible dedication and work over the years has made the Garage Sale what it is today.

Coming up on September 9th we'll be celebrating the 10th Annual Big Get Together in Rockford, and on September 16th we'll celebrate the 10th Annual Charity Dinner in Providence, "A Night at the Art Club." If you live in either one of these regions, we hope to see you there! You can find more information here on our website: <http://haitianproject.org/content/community> or call Elizabeth O'Connell Cross at [815-505-1287](tel:815-505-1287).

On the school campus, our Volunteers continue to get settled in and work each day to lay the ground work for their role with the Louverturians in the year ahead. While they work on buffing their Kreyol speaking skills and learn important functions like trash management (incinerator, compost, recycling, etc)—which is no small feat for a campus of 400 people, they are also finding ways to directly serve the community before the official arrival of the LCS students for the new school year. Emily Marquet, who is adding a theatre program to the school this year, has already started collaborating on a play written especially for the Timoun Program (photo above), while Rebecca Finney is working with LCS staff to organize the donated supplies for the small children in this program (photo above).

Also in preparation for the students, Venelle and Nikol, members of THP's Ragamuffin program, are making the new blue and white uniforms for LCS students. We look forward to this exciting change that will dress our students in the official LCS/THP colors.

In the spirit of saying "yes" to opportunities to support our mission, last Wednesday we brought to mind our mission statement that focuses and pushes our work forward. Today I'd like draw attention to the Charism of The Haitian Project as it too forms our work, motivates us and challenges us spiritually:

Drawing on Pope John Paul II's clear teachings on the spirituality and purpose of human labor, The Haitian Project community has grounded itself in the spiritual and practical reality that work is both internally and externally transformative. Through our commitment to working first and foremost for the benefit of others, we have learned that we can improve ourselves and the world around us simultaneously.

By living our specific charism, we have discovered that work done voluntarily for the benefit of others is a powerful, grace-filled catalyst for personal metanoia and environmental change. In this context, the success of our labor not only increases our sense of personal dignity and transforms the world around us, but it also deepens our trust in God and our willingness to serve.

Led by the Holy Spirit and enabled by the abundant gifts He provides, we have discovered that work done voluntarily by a community of people drawn from all sectors of society acting in unison creates a quality of solidarity reminiscent of the early Christian communities recorded in Acts.

Like the early Christian communities, our community has flourished since we accepted our specific charism of working for others [Christian Service] and began living intentionally in accordance with the following three principles:

What we receive for free, we must give for free. [Mathew 10:8] This is the basic motto of our community—it is the fundamental call to service.

If anyone is unwilling to work, neither should that one eat. [Second Thessalonians 3:10] This principle is not merely about survival, it is about fulfilling our responsibilities as social beings and to one another. In a community, everyone is to be personally industrious. We are all called to work and produce. We are not to live solely off the labors of others if we are capable of making a contribution ourselves. We are also reminded that as Christian brothers and sisters we belong to one another. When we fulfill our personal responsibility to a community, we become a catalyst for justice and charity.

If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.(Mark 9:35) This gives direction to our zeal for service. It sends us to serve the weakest and most marginalized. We capture this concept in the Kreyol phrase “tetamba”. Usually this means “upside down” or “chaos”, but to us it is the reminder to pass below and support from the bottom up.

We are also reminded that “our” work is part of a plan beyond our comprehension. Humbly recognizing that all good things come from God, we accept that work with God requires letting go of ourselves and our pride. While leadership and chain of command are important, all must participate equally in the work since we have the same duty and the same dignity before God.

Hearing the call to join this community and live this charism, we have a choice to respond with a simple “yes” for a period of weeks, years or a lifetime.

Peace, Patrick

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To make a donation or to read recently posted community updates go to www.haitianproject.org

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“What you receive as gift, you must give as gift.”
“Se gratis nou resevwa, Se gratis tou pou nou bay.”

---Matthew 10:8