



Solidarity News Notes...

News from the Rich in Mercy Institute – Summer 2017

Restoring Trees Will Speed Hurricane Recovery and Combat Hunger in Ducis Village



In October 2016 a category four hurricane – with winds up to 145 mph – ravaged the southern interior of Haiti, collapsed houses, and uprooted or snapped off trees including hundreds of coconut palms, mangoes, avocados and breadfruit. Homelessness and hunger followed. In Ducis village the **Rich in Mercy Institute** (RiM) targeted reconstruction and repair of a dozen houses belonging to widows, single mothers and similarly vulnerable persons. Although the UN and other agencies trucked in food aid, the loss of food bearing trees and the livelihoods that depend on them constitutes a continuing crisis of hunger and economic insecurity.

Rich in Mercy, with the generous support of an anonymous donation received via the **IHM Sisters** (Monroe, MI), will launch a second phase of recovery assistance aimed at restoring coconut palm trees which provide food for local consumption and generate income through the sale of coconuts to other parts of the region and country. With additional funding, other vital trees such as plantains, mangoes, and avocados will be restored to the area.

"Tool Bank" Promotes Training in Bio-Intensive Gardening for Increased Food Security

Biointensive gardening is an organic agricultural system that focuses on achieving maximum yields from a minimum area of land, while simultaneously increasing biodiversity and sustaining the fertility of the soil. The goal of the method is long term sustainability on a closed system basis. **Lamothe Lormier**, a Haitian environmentalist and founder of **Operasyon Kolibri** (Operation Hummingbird) - a center of environmental education based in Cape Haitian – studied this system in California and is a passionate promoter of its benefits for Haitian farmers. .



Deep soil preparation through the technique of "double digging" to loosen soil to a depth of 24 inches creates pore space for air and water to move freely, enhances soil microorganisms, facilitates root penetration, minimizes water loss and is essential to growing "bio-intensively". With a **Rich in Mercy** grant for the production of custom tools, **Operasyon Kolibri** has established a "tool bank" that will supply "double digging" tools for training in bio-intensive growing and from which farmers can borrow the tools needed to apply productivity-enhancing, "bio-intensive" techniques.

"Skip a Lunch, Save a Child" Fund Reduces Malnutrition and Promotes Early Learning



Many children in the **St. Louis de Montfort** parish of Port au Prince are at high risk for chronic malnutrition and are seriously disadvantaged in terms of growth, development and potential to survive.

The **Rich in Mercy** "Skip a Lunch, Save a Child" fund, created by **Marlene Shaw** of Republic, PA following a **Rich in Mercy** "reverse mission pilgrimage" to Haiti, provides partial financial support for a nutrition and early education "head start" program under the direction of **Sr. Eileen Davey**, a **Holy Union** sister from Fall River, MA, the program provides a daily, nutritious meal, structured play, and various formative educational activities for "high risk" children. Beginning with 30 children in 2002 the program now regularly serves nearly 100 preschoolers every day!

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Sisters of St. Antoine of Fondwa to Launch Primary Care Health Clinic in Isolated Trouin

Trouin is a remote, mountainous community situated 30 miles west of Port au Prince, the capital of Haiti. The **Little Sisters of St. Antoine of Fondwa** arrived there in 2012 to establish a formation house for novice sisters after receiving a donation of land from the Catholic diocese of Jacmel. An estimated 25,000 people in the area experience extreme material poverty, depending on subsistence agriculture to live day by day and relying entirely on inconsistent rainfall for agricultural production and daily needs. After establishing their novitiate house, the Sisters opened a preschool and began organizing activities to educate children with emphasis on protecting the environment, hygiene and sanitation.



Primary health care, gynecological services, and maternal child care services in the region were non-existent. Medical emergencies forced people to travel two hours or more by unreliable public transportation to Leogane or Port au Prince and patients would often die on route. In order to provide much-needed accessible emergency care as well as pre- and post- natal care, the Sisters undertook to construct the first primary care clinic in the area (shown above).

A gift of US \$20,000 from a US religious congregation honoring the 20th anniversary of the Little Sisters' founding covered most of the construction costs. **Rich in Mercy** executive director, Dr. Rich Gosser, delivered an additional grant to **Sr. Claudetter Prevot**, general superior of the community (photo center), and **Sr. Dieula** (photo left), who recently completed nursing studies and will be "on call" full time at the new clinic. This grant will cover much of the cost of adding doors, floors, and windows to the clinic building. Additional funding to complete the construction is needed. Donations can be made through **Rich in Mercy** (329 N Fairfield St, Ligonier, PA 15658) or via the RIM website (www.rimin.org). The clinic is scheduled to open in October 2017.



Visionary Leadership and Generous Benefactors Boost Hurricane Recovery for Sisters



Nearly 50 years ago at the age of 18 **Sr. Denise Desil** left her family in Port au Prince and joined the congregation of the **Little Sisters of St. Therese**, a Catholic religious community of more than 250 Haitian women with missions in 42 mostly remote parts of Haiti providing general education, vocational education, health care, and training in environmentally sound agricultural techniques to the rural poor that make up 85% of the population. Last May she was elected general superior of the Sisters, the most recent stage of a journey along which she has studied nursing and public health while developing administrative and leadership skills. Her vision is that of "a future for rural Haiti that will have all that we need – schools, universities, roads, communications, infrastructure, jobs, a strong economy, and hospitals." A deep faith in God shapes her strategic vision: "I believe God is always working for his people, so his people should always be working to serve one another."

Sr. Denise acknowledges facing serious challenges: "The most difficult part of my job is when I am constrained by resources." In October 2016 hurricane Matthew severely damaged 7 houses of the Little Sisters and slowed construction of a new school and sisters' residence in Pemele located in the area ravaged by the category 4 storm. Thanks to very generous individual and congregational benefactors of the Little Sisters through the **Rich in Mercy Institute**, restoration of the houses and the construction in Pemele is continuing at a slow but steady pace. "I am very fortunate to have **Rich in Mercy** and our American benefactors behind my community, supporting our work", asserts Sr. Denise. **Rich in Mercy** is grateful for the donors who make collaboration with the **Little Sisters of St. Therese** possible and empower them to be a strong force for positive change in rural Haiti.

