

What do you “do” when you go to Haiti?

By Tina Lampe

It took me several years to commit to making a trip to Haiti. Partly due to timing and cost, but mostly due to the question of “what could I contribute?” I am a planner ... I wanted to know what the team “did” or “built” during their time in Haiti. It turns out the most important task of the trip was building relationships.

With our traveling companions: Knowing someone from church, through a shared committee, or sitting by them at mass only scratches the surface of who they are. Seeing how they react to a different culture and fewer conveniences is getting to know someone on a deeper level. Everyone on the team was compassionate, generous and thoughtful. They made us “newbies” feel like we were one of the group from the very beginning.

With our translators: The three young men who accompanied us – Christopher (his 8th time), Marco (his 3rd year), and Nickenson (his 2nd year) – are truly amazing. They left their families to help us navigate the city and countryside, and their command of the English language was remarkable! They were engaged in every aspect of our trip: traveling, hiking, praying, teaching, dining, chores and recreation. It was more like they were part of our team than guys hired to simply translate.

With our priest: Fr. Eddy (Jean Eddy-Louis) has been the pastor of our Belle Fontaine sister parish for about two years, and this was the first time most of the team had met him face-to-face. Without a doubt he is there to serve the Lord! The geographic region of our sister parish has been grossly understated! The various chapels he visits will wait for months to receive sacraments, until he can get there. He is constantly on the road, and by “road” I mean windy, steep, rocky and one-lane dirt paths (our 20-ish mile trip from the airport to our final destination in Ducrabon took about 3 hours). We were lucky that All Saints helped Fr. Eddy acquire a truck within the past year (thank you Loaves & Fish contributors!), and he was extremely grateful and hauled us everywhere. He also used our funds to hire local carpenters to build furniture for a rectory where we stayed, as well as local Haitians to prepare our food. He made the whole experience a celebration, coordinating musicians and dancing. Sunday mass was the highlight for him – the church was packed, and he was singing at the podium!

With the teachers and residents: For those who coordinated the trip and the teacher workshops for umpteen-millionth time, you could see the connections they’ve made through the years. The nuns and brothers, teachers, and even some students recognized them. At the teacher workshops, the participants were engaged and seemed to really appreciate the ideas we presented. Afterward, due to the rapport that the team has been building, the teachers opened up about types of information they would like to see at future workshops.

Without a doubt, the relationships we are building with the people of Haiti are key to our mission. Yes, they need funds. Yes, they need supplies. But most of all, they want our

compassion, understanding and respect. Thank you for all you have done to support our sister parish. Keep up the good work, and if you don't mind "roughing it," consider making the trek!

--- PHOTO CAPTIONS ---

- 1) Fr Eddy singing at a packed Sunday Mass
- 2) The truck All Saints helped purchase, hauling mattresses for teachers attending the trainings.
- 3) Theresa Lampe reading to Haitian students with the help of Translator Chris.

--- GRATITUDE REFLECTION SIDEBAR ---

"Gratitude enables us to see the interconnectedness of all created things and the sacredness of human life, because all are gifts from God."

~ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* encyclical

We are interconnected with our sister parish. Ideas for this:

- Attend a monthly Haiti meeting, the first Tuesday of the month.
- Invite a Haiti team member to speak to one of your groups/committees.
- Clean a closet and donate your unused items to a local charity. Add their cost to your Lenten alms jar.