

OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER, 2005

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish*:

We start this month's issue with a little story.....

The Caribbean Fisherman

A boat docked in a tiny Caribbean village. An American tourist complimented the Caribbean fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took him to catch them.

"Not very long," answered the fisherman.

"But then, why didn't you stay out longer and catch more?" asked the American.

The fisherman explained that his small catch was sufficient to meet his needs and those of his family.

The American asked, "But what do you do with the rest of your time?"

"I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, and take a siesta with my wife. In the evenings, I go into the village to see my friends, play the guitar, and sing a few songs. I have a full life."

The American interrupted, "I have an MBA from Harvard and I can help you! You should start by fishing longer every day. You can then sell the extra fish you catch. With the extra revenue, you can buy a bigger boat."

And after that?" asked the fisherman.

With the extra money the larger boat will bring, you can buy a second one and a third one and so on until you have an entire fleet of trawlers. Instead of selling your fish to a middle man, you can then negotiate directly with the processing plants and maybe even open your own plant. You can then leave this little village and move to Mexico City, Los Angeles, or even New York City! From there you can direct your huge new enterprise."

"How long would that take?" asked the fisherman.

"Twenty, perhaps twenty-five years," replied the American.

"And after that?"

"Afterwards? Well my friend, that's when it gets really interesting," answered the American, laughing. "When your business gets really big, you can start selling stocks and make millions!"

"Millions? Really? And after that?" said the fisherman.

"After that you'll be able to retire, live in a tiny village near the coast, sleep late, play with your grandchildren, catch a few fish, take a siesta with your wife and spend your evenings singing and enjoying your friends."

And the moral is: Know where you're going in life... you may already be there.

OPERATION STARFISH CONFERENCE TO BE RESCHEDULED

Hurricane Wilma forced the postponement of the Operation Starfish conference planned for October 26-28, 2005 in Deerfield Beach, Florida. Pastors and church leaders were looking forward to sharing their experiences with Operation Starfish and helping guide the future of this simple fundraising concept for the benefit of the poor. At the suggestion of Fr. Richard Martin, who began the "Starfish" idea at Nativity Catholic Church in 1998, Food For The Poor, Inc. agreed to host this gathering near its headquarters in Deerfield Beach.

New dates are being considered by the interdenominational planning committee. As soon as a decision is made, scheduled participants will be re-contacted. New participants are welcome. For additional information, contact Jim McDaniel (954-415-7723, jamesm@foodforthe poor.com) or Barbara Fazekas (954-427-2222 x6258, barbf@foodforthe poor.com).

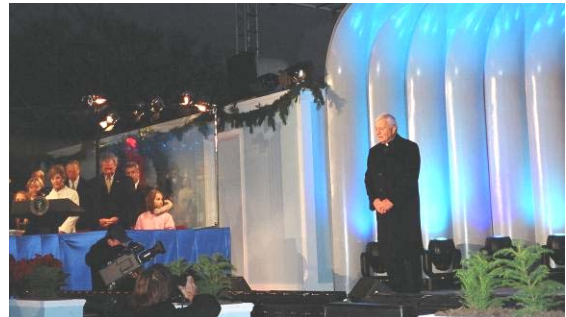
STARFISH PRIEST JOINS PRESIDENT TO LIGHT CHRISTMAS TREE

Fr. Richard Martin, pastor of Nativity Catholic Church in Burke, Virginia, was selected to give the invocation at the Christmas Pageant of Peace on Dec. 1, 2005. He joined President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush before a live audience of 7,000 and a worldwide television audience to light the National Christmas Tree at the White House.

Fr. Martin is the founder of *Operation Starfish*, a program he began in 1998 to help the poor of Haiti. Working through the Christian charity, Food For The Poor, Inc., more than 200 schools and churches across the United States have used *Operation Starfish* to feed the hungry, and build houses, schools and clinics throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

The night before the tree lighting ceremony, Fr. Martin addressed over 400 people at the historic Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. at the Christmas Pageant of Peace Gala. He spoke about how important it is to break down the barriers that divide people, families and nations, especially at this time of year. He received many comments afterwards from people who were personally moved by his words.

As twilight ebbed on December 1st, Fr. Martin met the President and First Lady backstage while they awaited the cue to step into the lights. There they shared a prayerful moment. The invocation was very beautiful and dramatic, with a choir humming and the U.S. Navy Band playing softly in the background. Fr. Martin was just a few feet away from the President, and both their heads were bowed as they spoke to God together.



At the end of the program, Fr. Martin joined the President, First Lady, Maya Angelou and others to sing Christmas Carols from the stage. Later in the evening, Fr. Martin joined the President and First Lady at a White House reception. They were able to speak again for a few minutes. Fr. Martin said "I don't yet fully understand the final outcome of this exchange, but I know in my heart that God had a reason for this sacred moment."

Fr. Martin's invocation is available on the web at <http://www.news8.net/specialty/pageant.hrb>. The text of his invocation follows:

THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE, INC.®

www.pageantofpeace.org

INVOCATION
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE OPENING CEREMONY
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 1, 2005

Rev. Richard B. Martin, Pastor
Nativity Catholic Church, Burke, Virginia

GOD OUR FATHER WE ASK YOUR BLESSING UPON ALL OF US, ADULT AND CHILD, NEAR AND FAR:

-- BLESS US HERE WITH THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY BEFORE THIS, OUR NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE;

--BLESS THOSE WATCHING FROM HOMES ACROSS OUR COUNTRY;

--FROM HOSPITAL BEDS AND NURSING HOMES;

--FROM MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

HELP US, LORD, AS WE CELEBRATE THIS CHRISTMAS, TO REMEMBER THAT ONLY ONE CHRISTMAS, THE FIRST, TOOK PLACE IN A MANGER.

EVERY CHRISTMAS SINCE THEN TAKES PLACE IN HUMAN HEARTS.

IT IS WITHIN THE MANGER OF OUR HEARTS THAT LOVE IS BORN AND GROWS.

AND MAY THIS LOVE BE FELT TONIGHT AMONG FAMILIES OR FRIENDS WHO MAY BE DIVIDED.

FOR ONLY WHEN WE APPROACH EACH OTHER WITH LOVE AND RESPECT WILL BARRIERS COME DOWN, OPENING THE WAY TO PEACE.

EVERY TIME OUR HANDS REACH OUT TO OTHERS, THAT IS CHRISTMAS.

WE PRAY THAT THE MESSAGE OF LOVE AND PEACE BORN ONLY ONCE IN BETHLEHEM WILL TAKE ROOT IN THE MANGERS OF ALL OF OUR HEARTS.

WE OFFER THIS PRAYER IN JESUS' NAME.

AMEN.

NATIVITY VILLAGE UPDATE

Following the completion of housing units for all 500 families in Nativity Village, work on Phase II has begun. This new work will address the need to break the cycle of poverty through an extensive development program that will include education, proper nutrition and health care, and business development (i.e., a chicken farm and possible micro loans). The first stage of this project will focus on the expansion and renovation of the Nativity Village School. This will include the construction of a new, two-story building consisting of nine classrooms and an office; refurbishing and reinforcing the existing pavilion structure for conversion to a vocational school; and the construction of a cafeteria. It is here that the combined efforts of Food For The Poor, Operation Starfish, and Caritas will combat malnutrition and its devastating effects on the youngsters of Nativity Village.

In August, Father Wedner Berard, the local priest, left for Rome. His replacement, Father Printemps, is continuing to oversee the construction work. Food For The Poor – Haiti Projects Coordinators still have not been able to visit the construction site, due to violence in the area. However, Fr. Printemps and the local village leadership are keeping a close eye on the work and are reporting progress. They have



recently sent us photos showing the school construction, which is moving to the second floor level.

The walls are going up and the reinforced concrete floors have been poured. The forms have been installed to pour the concrete for the columns and they will soon set up the forms for the first-floor ceiling. The workers are still being escorted to and from the site and the construction materials, which are being stored at the rectory, are delivered each morning. Materials not used are returned at the end of the day for safekeeping.

NEWS FROM HAITI

In one recent week, more than 30 people were abducted in the increasingly violent country of Haiti. Emmanuel Cantave, leader of the Lavalas Family party, was held by armed gangs in the Cite Soleil slum on the northern outskirts of the capital. Cantave said his party and his family pooled a ransom of more than \$25,000 to set him free.

In the capital of Port-au-Prince, abductions have surged as the country prepares for national elections scheduled for Jan. 8. The elections, however, have been postponed several times. According to Haitian police, there were 30 cases of kidnappings for the whole of November and 30 cases just for the first week of December. The real figures could be up to 10 times higher, since many families prefer not to report cases to police and to negotiate directly with kidnappers. At the beginning of December, 14 school children, a U.S. missionary and a Haitian journalist were among about two dozen people who were taken hostage and then released for ransom in the area.

Cite Soleil, the country's largest slum, where about 200,000 people live in squalid conditions, remains a hub for violence plaguing the capital. Well-armed gangs clash nearly daily with U.N. peacekeepers in armored vehicles. The U.N. force, which has pledged to secure Cite Soleil before national elections, has said it feared some gangs could try to disrupt elections.

HAITIAN WISDOM

Senyè,
Gen yon gwo dyab ki rele Dekourajman.
Nou mande w' voye l' ale
Paske l'ap nwi nou.

Lord,
There is a big devil called Discouragement.
We ask you to send him away
Because he is bothering us.

AUGUST PRAYER REQUESTS

Our readers have submitted the following prayer requests for this month:

† For Bettye Castro, may her recuperation from her second hip surgery be quick and fully successful, and for her husband Nash, as he recovers from his recent knee surgery, and we also wish them a happy 60th wedding anniversary;

† For Nick and Rosa Fantasia of Perth, Western Australia, celebrating 50 years of wedded bliss;

† For Adele Verdino, as she deals with a serious health concern;

† For Terry Moore, that God wrap His loving arms around Terry and his family as they prepare for a surgical procedure;

† For individuals who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christmas be felt by all those who struggle;

† For all our friends at Food For The Poor, and for all those who work here and abroad to alleviate suffering;

† For the people of Haiti, that the violence may subside, and that the international community come together to help bring the people back on their feet and the land back to life;

For these and all our intentions, hear us, Oh Lord...

VISIT US ON THE WEB

Please visit us at www.starfishmission.org . We would appreciate your comments and suggestions. Feel free to contact us at info@starfishmission.org.

For information on Food For The Poor's programs in Haiti, contact Barbara Fazekas at 954-427-2222 x6258; barbf@foodforthe poor.com. Web: www.foodforthe poor.org.

CLOSING PRAYER...

Make us worthy, Lord,
To serve our fellow men
Throughout the world who live
And die in poverty and hunger.
Give them through our hands,
This day their daily bread,
And by our understanding love,
Give peace and joy.

Prayer of Pope Paul VI

*Manje sa-a ou voye bay nou-an Papa,
Manje ki bay lavi.*

The food you send us O God,
It is the food of life.

Haitian Meal Prayer

Have a Most Blessed Christmas...

NEW SUBSCRIPTION? If you have a friend who would like to receive this newsletter, go to www.starfishmission.org to sign up, or send a note to Operation Starfish, Church of the Nativity, 6400 Nativity Lane, Burke, VA 22015.

CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION? If you no longer wish to receive OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER, send an email to info@starfishmission.org or send a note to the address above.

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Edited this month by Jim McDaniel (info@starfishmission.org)

OPERATION STARFISH: MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

As a young boy walked the beach at dawn, he noticed an old man ahead of him picking up starfish and tossing them into the sea. Catching up with the man, the boy asked why he was doing this. The old man explained to the boy that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.

“But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish,” exclaimed the boy. “How can your effort make any difference?”

The old man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it safely into the waves. He turned to the boy and said, “It made a difference to that one.”

--Based on the writing of Loren Eiseley