

OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER

JUNE, 2006

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish*:

A prayer we can say to begin each day...

At the beginning of each day,
After we open our eyes
To receive the light
Of that day,

As we listen to the voices
And sounds
That surround us,

We must resolve to treat each hour
As the rarest of gifts,
And be grateful
For the consciousness
That allows us to experience it,
Recalling in thanks
That our awareness is a present
From we know not where,
Or how, or why.

When we rise from sleep let us rise for the joy
Of the true Work that we will be about
This day,
And considerately cheer one another on.

Life will always provide matters for concern.
Each day, however, brings with it reasons for
Joy.

Every day carries the potential
To bring the experience of heaven;
Have the courage to expect good from it.

Be gentle with this life,
And use the light of life
To live fully in your time.

(From Always We Begin Again by John McQuiston II)

LENT 2006 OPERATION STARFISH® AT NATIVITY CHURCH – A RECORD-BREAKER AT \$225,322.70!

Parishioners at Nativity Catholic Church in Burke, Virginia gave at record-breaking \$225,322.70 to fund their Operation Starfish® projects in Haiti this year. Speaking at a ceremony at Food For The Poor, Inc., Fr. Richard Martin, Nativity's pastor, said "This gift represents the proceeds of children's lemonade stands and bake sales, the daily sacrifices of families who ate more simply during Lent, and gifts in memory of loved ones. This large amount shows what happens when an entire community turns its hearts toward the poor. Not only did we raise a record amount for our work with Food For The Poor in Haiti, but our Diocesan Bishops Lenten Appeal raised 40% more than this year's goal. When people give to the poor, they become more generous overall."

Food For The Poor President Robin Mahfood, acknowledging the generosity of Nativity parishioners, stated "The parish of the Church of the Nativity is shining the light of Christ's love into the darkness of poverty. The Church of the Nativity is showing the world what collective Christian charity can accomplish."

Nativity parishioners have given more than \$1.3 million since Operation Starfish® began there in 1998. This year, Nativity's Operation Starfish® will include:

- The first phase of "Nativity Village at Petit Anse," a development that will include housing for 250 families – the first 28 double units will be constructed in 2006
- Sanitation and toilet facilities
- A fishing village co-op
- And a tilapia farm

For more details on work underway at Nativity Village at Merger, and work planned for Nativity Village at Petit-Anse, contact: jim@starfishmission.org.

DANNY'S GIFT – PART II

Danny is a 7-year old parishioner at Nativity Church. Last year, Danny saved every penny of his allowance during Lent. He put all his money in a Starfish box and placed it in the Starfish basket at Nativity Church. Danny's 2005 gift totaled \$45.93.

This year, there was another Starfish box in the Lenten basket from little Danny. It was signed "FROM DANNY CHAMBLEE & MOM." The 2006 gift from Danny and his Mom totaled \$200.00. Danny's message is the same – "Use this money to help the poor children in Haiti." His message is taken to heart by Nativity's pastor, Fr. Dick Martin, and by the people of Food For The Poor, to whom this gift is entrusted.

The increase in Danny's gift is not unusual. When people are blessed with the spirit of giving, their ability to give and their desire to give keeps increasing. This is why Nativity can reach out to fill so many compelling needs, both here at home and around the world.

HAITI PILGRIMAGE PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER, 2006

Nativity Parish's first pilgrimage trip to Haiti in over 2 years is tentatively set for September 13 – 17, 2006. On this trip, about a dozen parishioners and friends of Nativity will visit Fr. Jean Printemps and the people of Nativity Village at Merger to dedicate the new primary school there (conditions permitting). Then the group will travel to Cap Haitien to spend some time with Fr. Duken Augustin and the villagers of Petit-Anse, where Nativity's Operation Starfish® will begin a second "Nativity Village" development this year. Conditions in Haiti are more settled at this time, allowing pilgrimage trips to commence once again, although we keep a close eye on conditions in Port-au-Prince. This past March, Fr. Martin and Jim McDaniel visited Haiti with Food For The Poor officials and had a safe and comfortable experience.

Food For The Poor will coordinate travel arrangements for the group. The trip will begin with a visit to Food For The Poor's headquarters in Deerfield Beach, Florida. For more information, contact Jim McDaniel, Nativity's Operation Starfish® coordinator, at jim@starfishmission.org or 703-455-2400.

A RECENT VISIT TO HAITI

Pat DeFrain, a parishioner at Gesu Parish in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, recently returned from Haiti. Gesu Parish is a Jesuit-sponsored parish of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Gesu has an active social ministry with a twin parish, St. Jude's, in Haiti. Gesu also sponsors an annual third world crafts fair.

After my first visit to Haiti in 2004, I wrote about the hope and joy I found there. As I recently visited new places and returned to some old ones, I again saw hope and joy in the faces of the children and adults I encountered, even in the midst of their economic poverty. But my overwhelming feeling after this second visit is one of humility.

I feel humble

- as I talk to a woman who has spent ten years of her life caring for more than thirty orphans affected by AIDS
- as I watch St. Jude's pastor Fr. Bichara balance his many responsibilities and concerns for his flock with graciousness for his guests
- to be welcomed with joy and hospitality by a family where four adults and two children sleep on two double beds in a room where those beds, a small table and a small bookshelf make up the whole of their living space
- as I eat lunch at the home of a woman who has spent her life trying to teach agricultural practices that will preserve Haiti's land and beauty instead of destroying it
- as I watch dozens of children being fed by a woman who could not stand to see them go hungry, and managed to find a way to give them lunch five days a week with the help of Norwich Mission House

As I absorb all these experiences, I know the meaning of Jesus' words in Luke 17:21: "For behold, the kingdom of God is among you." And I think about my own place in this world. What am I doing to bring about the kingdom of God? How can I serve others in a true spirit of love? What can I do to bring healing to the world? How can I use less of the world's precious resources? How can I help bring about justice for the oppressed? I will be reflecting and praying on these questions. And I will beg God to show me the way to live a less selfish life that seeks to build up the Kingdom of God on earth.
Pat DeFrain

AUGUST PRAYER REQUESTS

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

- † For the repose of the soul of Mr. John B. Martin, and for his family;
- † For the Lunney family;
- † For the Fischl family;
- † For the repose of the soul of Mr. Vince Mikolainis, and for his family;
- † For all our children and college students, who are using the summer to rest, to travel, to play, and to assist those in need;
- † For Terry Moore, that God's loving kindness continue to bless him and his family;
- † For individuals who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christ 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, who struggle against all odds to get back on their feet and to bring their land back to life;

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

HAITIAN WISDOM

Senyè,

Ala nou kontan
Se pa nou k'ap kenbe ou
Men se ou k'ap kenbe nou.

Lord,

How glad we are
That we don't hold you
But that you hold us.

---Courtesy of Baptist Haiti Mission

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 THOUGHT...

Always remember to forget
The things that made you sad.
But never forget to remember
The things that made you glad.

Always remember to forget
The friends that proved untrue.
But never forget to remember
Those that have stuck by you.

Always remember to forget
The troubles that passed away.
But never forget to remember
The blessings that come each day.

-- an Irish proverb

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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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