



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY'S OPERATION STARFISH® NEWSLETTER AUGUST, 2009

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish®*.

Let us begin with a photo meditation...

Our friends at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Arlington, Virginia support over 1,200 students in Medor, Haiti. The school lunch program provides each student and teacher in Medor with a hot lunch. Here, students are carrying rice and beans to the classrooms.

In a recent visit to Virginia, Fr. Leroy, Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Medor, said, "We count on you and you can count on us, because God listens to the prayers of the poor."



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY'S 2009 STARFISH RESULTS...

By the end of Lent this year, parishioners and friends of Nativity Catholic Church had raised \$263,318.29 through their Operation Starfish® campaign. This gift will fund the development of a 5th "Nativity Village" project in Haiti. In accepting the donation, Food For The Poor President Robin Mahfood said, "Your generous gift of self-sustaining projects and sturdy, safe housing are tremendous blessings – to those who receive, as well as to those who have given. Church Of The Nativity parishioners truly have a heart for Haiti. On behalf of those without a voice, please accept my deepest and most humble thank you for your continued support."

In addition to the Lenten Starfish campaign, Nativity parishioners provided continuing financial support to Food For The Poor throughout 2008. Last September, Nativity raised \$100,000 in one weekend for Haiti hurricane relief. Water wells, reforestation projects, scholarship programs, medical and food programs saw another \$40,000 in donations from Nativity parishioners, over and above Starfish. In a May 28 ceremony at Food For The Poor's international headquarters in Florida, Nativity pastor, Fr. Dick Martin, said, "We are excited and honored to have been called to help the poorest of the poor in Haiti. To date, Nativity has built four Nativity Villages with hundreds of houses, and self-sustainable fishing villages, tilapia farms, sewing co-ops, schools, and clinics."

The newest development project, "Nativity Village at Caracol," funded with this year's Starfish gift, will include housing, clean water, sanitation, a community center, the "Georgette Martin Sewing Co-op," and a 60-acre agricultural farm. The farm will be supported by other church and school Starfish projects, including one at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Hope Valley, RI.

Caracol is located on the north coast of Haiti, just east of Cap Haitien, Haiti's second largest city. The development is designed and managed by Food For The Poor's Projects Department, with on-site supervision provided by Fr. Duken Augustin. Fr. Duken, who visited Nativity Parish in April, has also overseen the construction and operation of Nativity Village at Prolonge, which today has over 350 houses, a primary school, the St. Anthony Health Center, and a vocational training program.

Since Operation Starfish® began at Church of the Nativity in 1998, more than 800 houses have been constructed, along with water and sanitation projects, schools, community centers, vocational training programs and small businesses. Nativity funded Food For The Poor's first Fishing Village co-op in Haiti, at Petit-Anse. Today, Food For The Poor operates 21 fishing villages in Haiti and 17 in Jamaica. Nativity parishioners and friends have contributed more than \$2.2 million towards Food For The Poor's ministry in Haiti over the last 11 years.

NEXT TRIP TO HAITI – NOVEMBER, 2009

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Fr. Martin will take another group of Nativity parishioners to Haiti on November 9, 2009. This 5-day mission trip, sponsored by Food For The Poor, will leave Washington on Monday, Nov. 9 and return Friday, Nov. 13. We will stop in Ft. Lauderdale to tour Food For The Poor's world headquarters and meet with their leadership, then spend 4 days in the Port-au-Prince area. While in Haiti we will inaugurate Nativity Village at Lozandier, the 4th Nativity Village development project sponsored by our parish. Visits are also planned to Nativity Village at Merger – the first Nativity Village project – along with Cardinal Leger Leper Hospital, Rainbow House Orphanage, the Little Children of Jesus Home for the handicapped and other sites that serve the needs of the poor.

We are working with Food For The Poor's Mission Trip staff to create an educational and spiritually stimulating itinerary, with hands-on opportunities and plenty of interaction with the Haitian people.

If you feel called to this journey, contact us at jim@starfishmission.org for more information. All are welcome!

MAP OF HAITI

A good map of Haiti, produced by the United Nations, can be found at <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/haiti.pdf>

ARLINGTON DIOCESE MISSION FAIR PLANNED

The first Arlington Diocese Mission Fair will be held on Saturday, October 3, 2009 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. James Catholic Church in Falls Church, Virginia. Parishes from across the Diocese will be represented at this day-long event. Guest speakers, workshops and exhibits will focus attention on the mission work of the Arlington Diocese. Clergy, religious and lay leaders will gather to teach best practices, share experiences and learn from each other, in an effort to affirm and encourage the Gospel call to serve the poor. Theresa Patterson, Executive Director of the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas, will give a keynote address.

Hosted by the Pontifical Mission Societies, with the support of Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde, this fair will highlight the work currently being done by Arlington Diocese churches in poor countries across the globe. The event will also provide opportunities for parishes and individuals to get involved in mission work. Catholic Relief Services, Food For The Poor and other organizations will be on hand.

Workshops will include:

- "Best Practices in Mission Work"
- "Revitalizing Your Mission Work"
- "A new Website to Support Your Mission"
- "Mission Boot Camp"
- "Involving Young People in Mission Work"
- "How One Person Can Make a Difference"

According to Fr. Pat Posey, Director, Pontifical Mission Societies, "We are planning a day of practical guidance and spiritual inspiration for all those who want to share what they are now doing to serve the poor of the world and those who are looking for opportunities to get involved. All are welcome!"

For more information on the Arlington Diocese Mission Fair and to register online, go to www.arlington.pontificalmissionsocieties.info/register.

ACROSS THE STREET AND AROUND THE WORLD

While Operation Starfish® may be Church of the Nativity's flagship social justice program, there's plenty more going on. Nativity Church and School staff, students, parents and parishioners are committed to Catholic social teaching. "We reach out to those in need, across the street and around the world," says Fr. Dick Martin, Nativity's pastor. Here's a partial list of places and programs where you can find Nativity people at work:

ACROSS THE STREET:

- Christ House, Alexandria, VA – parishioners serve meals & provide counsel
- "Scouting for Food" - Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venture Crew
- Summer Work Camp for teens – repairing homes for the poor
- Rachel House and Salvation Army Christmas Stockings – Brownies and Girl Scouts
- Nativity's Spanish Outreach Ministry – feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned, providing transportation
- JustFaith grads and Women of Nativity support "So Others Might Eat" and the Lamb Center, working with the homeless
- Fairfax Area Christian Emergency and Transitional Services
- Nativity contributes about \$40,000 a year to Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement, advocating for affordable housing, dental care for the needy, and E.S.L. classes
- An Advent Giving Tree provides hundreds of Christmas gifts to the needy
- Sunday Suppers provide meals to the homeless
- Nativity's Knights of Columbus build homes every year in Appalachia, volunteer for "Hearts and Hammers," conduct regular blood drives, support a state facility for the severely mentally handicapped, provide social events for low income retirement home residents, and many other charitable activities
- Nativity's "Mom & Me" group brings toddlers to visit nursing home patients, and assists with meals and baby items for new Moms
- Nativity Crafters hold an annual bazaar for charity
- Nativity Prayer Shawl Ministry knits and crochets comforting prayer shawls for the seriously ill
- Nativity Catholic School students support Christ House, St. Jude Hospital, Ronald McDonald House, Bunnies for Childrens Hospital, Catholic Charities' "Adopt a Family," and local nursing homes
- Nativity's Grief Support group reaches out to all who are hurting from loss
- Nativity and a local Methodist Church work together on "Martha's Table," to prepare meals for the needy
- AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

AROUND THE WORLD:

- Operation Starfish has built 5 entire villages in Haiti and channeled over \$2.2 million in aid to Food For The Poor
- Nativity supports the youth programs of the Diocese of Kumbo in Cameroon, including an annual 2-week youth camp
- Nativity funds a portion of the operating costs of Casa de Pobres in Tijuana, Mexico
- Nativity helps with annual operating expenses of Fr. Joseph Swam's Orphanage in India
- Nativity assists Msgr. John Katende's ministry in Uganda
- Nativity helps create small businesses for women in Kigoma Village, Tanzania
- Nativity supports the House of Kindness in the Phillipines, run by the Missionaries of Eucharistic Love
- Nativity's Bible Study Group provides a scholarship for a child in India
- Nativity School is twinned with Rainbow House, an orphanage for HIV/AIDS children in Haiti
- Nativity has a crochet ministry with Cardinal Leger Leper Hospital in Haiti
- Nativity supports "Education Across Borders," providing scholarships to students in the Dominican Republic
- Nativity School supports "Backpacks for Afghan Children"
- Nativity's "Our Lady of Knock Society" provides scholarship aid to poor children in Ireland
- AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

"We are truly an outreach parish," says Fr. Martin. Amen to that!!! For more information, or to volunteer, contact Nativity Catholic Church at 703-455-2400.

SOMETHING FOR THE "LITTLE ONES"

We are often asked how young children can make a difference. Our friends at the Lazarus Project (www.lazarusprojecthaiti.org) have an idea they would like to share with Operation Starfish® Newsletter readers...

Everyone's Chocolate Covered Pretzel Store □ by Debi Deloose

The 14 children in Room 5 at Lord of Life Preschool in Fairfax, Virginia learned about math and giving back to the community during the Spring of 2009. The children, who are all 5 years old, brought in change to add to the digital "piggy bank." This was a lesson in money, recognizing numerals, and counting.

At the end of April the class opened Everyone's Chocolate Covered Pretzel Store. After much discussion the children decided to make 150 bags of pretzels with two in each bag. At class meetings, the group decided to ask for donations rather than for a set

price. They also determined what supplies would be needed for the project. The pretzel assembly line was manned by the students, with help from the parents and teachers Kareen Lawson and Lorna Miller. Student-made advertising posters were put up and the store was run by students on the days of the sale.

The money earned from both of these integrated learning experiences is being donated to the Village of Hope School in Haiti. Pastor Ron Qualley visited the classroom and shared information on the Village of Hope school. He was also first in line for the pretzel store. The pretzel project earned \$375.54. The "piggy bank" held \$145.17. The grand total was \$520.17.

HAITI AND HIV/AIDS

The Associated Press reports that the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Haiti has decreased to below the levels found in other nations in the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Anti-retroviral drugs, education, and behavioral changes have reduced the infection rate to 2.2% in the 15-49 age group, according to the United Nations. The Bahamas, Guyana, Suriname, Botswana and Swaziland all have much higher rates, with Botswana peaking at 24% and Swaziland at 33%. The *accompagnateur* program, pioneered by Dr. Paul Farmer's "Partners in Health" is credited with a large impact on the disease. This program pays local workers to help HIV/AIDS patients adhere to medication regimens and preventive measures. Port-au-Prince's GHESKIO clinic, the world's oldest AIDS clinic, provides phone cards so patients can stay in touch with medical personnel. USAID says that Haiti does some of the best work in the world on AIDS care.

Nativity School has a partnership with *L'Arc en Ciel* (Rainbow House), an AIDS orphanage in Kenscoff, Haiti. Rainbow House is a pioneer in educating families how to treat HIV/AIDS in the home environment, reducing the incidence of families giving up HIV positive children to institutions. Each year, Rainbow House children and Nativity School students create art that is selected and printed as Christmas greeting cards. Proceeds from the sales of these cards go to support Rainbow House programs. For more information, contact Nativity School at 703-455-2300.

ONE PENNY AT A TIME, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

We have listed Nativity's Operation Starfish as a benefiting charity on GOODSEARCH. Every GOODSEARCH click yields a penny for Operation Starfish. All you have to do is go to www.GoodSearch.com; find the "Who Do You GoodSearch For?" Box; type "Operation Starfish"; and start searching. After you do this the first time, *Operation Starfish* will automatically become your default charity. It's easy to change, however, if you prefer that another good cause receive your search pennies. For example, our friends at **Food For The Poor** are also listed.

MARCH PRAYER REQUESTS

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

† For all the clergy, religious and lay ministers who labor “across the street and around the world” to serve the poor and marginalized, that God grant all of them strength, courage and the resources they need to continue their mission work;

† For the repose of the soul of Mr. Clervil, and for his dear family and friends as they adjust to his loss, especially Lesly who works tirelessly for the poor;

† For Barbara Fazekas, who is dealing with illness with humor and good spirits, and for those who are providing the care and support she needs;

† For teachers, school staff and administrators, that they be inspired this coming academic year to inform students about the poor and show them how they can act to make a difference;

† For all whose lives are in need of resurrection - those who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christ be felt by all those who struggle;

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

HAITIAN WISDOM

**“Senyè,
Si n’ap viv jodi a
Malgre siklòn, grangou, ak maladi,
Nou dwe di,
Mèsi Senyè.
Nou genlè la pou yon bi.”**

Lord,
If we are alive today in spite of
Hurricanes, hunger and sickness,
We should say,
Thank you, Lord.
We must be here for a purpose.

CLOSING THOUGHTS...

“Haiti has the distinction of having the highest maternal mortality rate in the western hemisphere.” --- *Doctors Without Borders, 2009*

“A water-poverty index release by the British-based Centre for Ecology and Hydrology ranked Haiti dead last out of 147 countries surveyed.” ---*Partners in Health, 2008*

In Haiti, the life expectancy of a male is 55 years; in the U.S. - 75 years.

In Haiti the under-5 mortality rate is 80/1,000; in the U.S. - 8/1,000.

---Compassion International, 2009

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

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 jim@starfishmission.org or send a note to the address above.

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