



Newsletter

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church
Haiti Outreach Ministry

October 2019

Teaching the Teachers

In rural Haiti, many teachers have no more than an elementary education. Very few have had any training in how to teach. Over the past 5 years, SMM has provided funds to train 26 teachers and 7 administrators. First they wanted training in the basics of education and classroom management. And then they wanted instructions in math — how to do it and how to teach it. Better education is definitely in the future.

You Can Do It, We Will Help

It has been almost 5 years since St. Margaret Mary came to partner with Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Haiti. Along the way there have been some major accomplishments. More than 1400 families have received goats. A new school was built at one of the chapels of OLPH (Our Lady of Fatima Chapel); also the main church and two chapels were rebuilt. But in the end what is important is not the numbers or the buildings but what these efforts have meant to the people of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.



One such parishioner is a young man named Peterson. Peterson comes from a family of 19, all living in a one-room house. He went to school for only a few weeks before his father pulled him out to work on their small plot of land. Peterson is illiterate, but has always been trying to

make something of himself. Peterson always seemed to come around whenever SMM was visiting the parish. He became known as the person who climbed the coconut palms to get treats for the SMM visitors. SMM encouraged him to go to school to learn to read and write and paid for him to apprentice with a mason. But he had no money for food. He could not manage to earn money while at the same time learning the masonry trade. At that time he suffered an eye injury which he was unable to have treated. It seemed that Peterson was going nowhere. But he did not give up on himself and neither did SMM. So we all tried again. This time Peterson was given money for food at the same time he was apprenticing with a well-known mason. Success at last! He has learned the trade and now is able to work on his own and provide for his new family.

Better Farming, Better Living

Viergenie Ladoceur and Marie Lourdes Tondreau of St. Francis of Assisi Chapel are becoming very successful farmers. Since they attended the OLPH (Our Lady of Perpetual Help) Agriculture program sponsored by St. Margaret Mary, they are proud to call themselves professional farmers. Use of improved farming methods has given them more profits from their crops. Beans are a major crop of the area. These women grew so many that they had them drying on their roofs. Plus they added tomatoes, peppers and yams to their cash crops.

Mme Ladouceur and Mme Tondreau, "Now, we harvest more products. We have enough to sell in the market to take care of our family and share with other people in need. The program brings a lot of changes for us. It makes us becoming professional farmers."



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SUSTAINABILITY

One of the outstanding successes at OLPH has been the Livestock Program directed by our friend and employee Baba. SMM provides funds for the initial animals, and all recipients agree to turn in the first-born baby to be given to another family. Most of the chapels have produced more babies than the number of animals they were originally given. In the past 5 years over 1400 families have received goats, 756 from SMM and 665 first-born. Baguette Island was the last to get animals and they still have 123 families on the waiting list, but they are slowly catching up.

Many families have been able to sell baby goats for money to send their children to school or buy fishing equipment or purchase larger animals or accumulate more goats to help them earn more income. The picture below shows people of Baguette receiving goats brought over by boat. These goats will make a huge improvement in their lives.



Commercial Loan Program

The Commercial Loan Program is a double win. It provides funds for the OLPH marriage program through the interest earned from loans and, just as importantly, provides income opportunities for families in the OLPH community. This photo shows Madam Rene Lambert, a loan recipient, reselling vegetables in the community marketplace that she had purchased in bulk with funds from her recent loan. She is selling cabbages, potatoes, peppers, eggplants and more, which provide her with income for her normal family expenses.



Madam Lambert's vegetable sales are an example of how many of the families in the area benefit from loans, which average about \$200 and are repaid over a 12 month period. Some families make other investments like purchasing fabric to make clothes for sale. Or they may need to cover unexpected health or other expenses for their children.

Since the loan program began in May, 2018, it has made more than 100 loans, totaling more than \$20,000, using \$15,000 in seed funds from St. Margaret Mary donations and

the remainder from their own return on investment. To date, borrowers have met every monthly 2% interest fee and every repayment of principal. In the process, the program has earned \$2,000 from interest payments which will be used for the support of the marriage program. The program is now in the process of offering another group of new loans.

The Commercial Loan Program also received a boost in September when the program's board of directors participated in a day-long training program by Madam Johanne

Destin. Madam Destin is a widely recognized consultant in banking and corporate planning in the Jacmel area. She generously gave the directors a thorough overview of good planning processes as well as the principles and working protocols of bookkeeping and accounts management. The board of directors was extremely pleased to receive this additional training. The training, along with the success the program has already experienced, will provide a strong foundation for its continued sustainability in the parish.



All cultures have their own wedding traditions.. In Haiti, a wedding must have a gold ring, new clothes and a big party for all one's family and friends. Civil authorities require a marriage license. All these things cost too much money. So most people don't get married. With the help of SMM over the past 5 years, 85 couples have been able to marry and have a great party for all their friends.

Someday, Hopefully, Peace in Haiti

There is much turmoil in Haiti these days. Since mid-September, there has been a deepening gas shortage, spiraling inflation, and food scarcity. The Haitian people are protesting by blocking roads, setting fires on the main highways, holding massive marches and rioting against the government and corruption. They want their President removed. Despite the situation there, SMM peace groups continue to meet to learn skills needed for conflict resolution.

Some thought from leaders of our Peace Program; Jean Lius of OLPH "There are

two things that keep from making peace in the Haitian community: the cooperation problem and the consciousness problem. These two are obstacles of making peace. If there is a conflict and there isn't cooperation and consciousness, you cannot make peace. If you try to do something to change your community, you won't find anybody to work with you. They will try to combat you instead. In that case you cannot make peace with yourself and your community is suffering." Claudy of St Joseph Chapel "The inflation makes things so difficult we cannot afford stuff to eat. That reason generates a lot of conflicts that lead to the present situation."