

# Newsletter

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church  
 Haiti Outreach Ministry

August 2020

## Our Lady of the Assumption Church

When OLA was founded three years ago there was a small temporary church and no rectory. A group of former residents of the area who now live in the U.S. gave the parish some money to begin the church. That was enough to clear the area, pour the foundation and put up the steel framing. And now along comes Fr. Walsh who hates to see a parish without a church. He is raising money for the next phase of the church building.



OLA July 2020

## A New Parish, A Very Different Year

After completing our 5-year partnership with Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in December, 2019, St. Margaret Mary prepared to begin a new partnership with Our Lady of the Assumption (OLA) in early January, 2020. And we did begin it. A team went to visit OLA in January to learn about the new parish and begin planning this new partnership.

We learned that OLA is a new parish, established 3 years ago. It consists of the main church and 4 chapels, with about 7,000 parishioners overall. Three of the chapels are within a one hour walk from the main church. Our Lady of Mercy however is a one hour drive PLUS a three hour walk. They have begun to build a church and rectory for the main area. The parish runs two schools, Our Lady of the Assumption and Our Lady of Mercy. Also there is a vocational school and an orphanage in the area.



Pere Guy Belange

Pere Guy Belange, the pastor, is an old friend of ours from our first year at St. Michael Parish.

We began to make lots of plans with OLA at the beginning of 2020 and then the pandemic hit both the U.S. and Haiti. All our planned trips were cancelled. Only those programs already begun and run by our Haitian partners were able to go forward.

But **SMM will not abandon our brothers and sisters in Haiti.** The whole parish is lacking food so we were able to send some money to the parish to buy some staples and have them distributed to the people of the parish.



St. Luke Chapel

### SMM Staff in Haiti

SMM has been very fortunate over the years to partner with many excellent people who make things happen in Haiti. Baba (Colin Augusnor) has worked with us for over 10 years, managing the Livestock Program and filling in wherever needed. Jean Bony is a man of many talents who came out of the diocese summer Peace Program and now helps with Education, the Commercial Loan Program, Agriculture, etc. We have been working with Ecunio Alfonse for many years on the Women's Empowerment Bank; he also has developed a program to teach hygiene and Covid 19 awareness to all the chapels. When we wanted to begin an Agriculture Program at Our Lady of Perpetua Help, Antonio Laurent came to teach and manage the program. Many thanks to these wonderful partners; our plans and ideas could not, would not work without you

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### More News and Events

CAUSE, the group that runs the Peace Program, is preparing a video focused on ways to prevent Covid 19.. They are also working with the youth of the parish to enter an essay contest sponsored by the American Embassy. SMM will also provide prizes for the best essays.

In the fall, we plan to open two new Women's Empowerment Banks.

Also in the fall, we plan to begin the Commercial Loan Program, which will earn money for the Marriage Program at OLA.

Update on our Seniors Program at Our Lady of Perpetual Help: the program is still going strong and providing food to 16 seniors. In addition, the farmers who raise the pigs receive compensation (baby pigs) thus improving the overall economy.

## Economic Empowerment

An important goal of each Haitian parish is to improve the economy of the area. In a rural, mountainous community, like OLA the economy is tied to farming. So in January, 2020, we began an Agriculture Program and a Livestock Program. In January, 120 families got goats of their own. Another 60 families got their goats in July 2020 with still 1350 families on the waiting list.



Getting Your Goat at OLA

The Agriculture Program also began in January. 100 participants began learning better ways of farming starting by planting a nursery at each chapel where they sowed peppers, tomatoes and eggplant. They also got yams to plant in



Planting the nursery

their gardens. In two of the chapels there was not enough water in the spring, so those nurseries had to be replanted.

After 5 years of the Livestock and Agriculture programs at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, we went back to see if and how these programs helped the farmers. Farmer Mirlaine Ridore told us that what she learned in the Ag training has helped her learn how to plant and tend to the crops. She also received a goat which has given her babies to sell and also manure to improve her crops. She now sees herself as a successful professional farmer and has confidence that in the future she will continue to be successful. She grows enough for her family with more to sell in the market,

### Education

Educating their children is extremely important to Haitian families. Although most children in OLA attend school, a good number do not. The reasons are not having enough money for tuition or children are too weak to go due to not having enough food. The past year has been extremely difficult due to the demonstrations (protests) that caused

the cancellation of school in the fall of 2019 and the cancellation in 2020 caused by Covid 19. Everyone is hoping and planning for school to be open this month. SMM is helping by providing money to buy cows for each of the teachers and text books for the students. We are also sending funds for school reopening safely measures such as hand-washing stations and masks.

### SMM Mission Relationship in Haiti

We believe that Relationship is the key to a rewarding and productive five years at Our Lady of the Assumption Church.

The four pillars of our relationship are:

**Haitian self-determination:** Local people identify the problem and determine the long-term solution. Haitian determination of what is necessary to address the cause of the problem encourages participants to develop a sense of ownership and a level of personal investment essential for project success.

**Sustainability:** Long term success requires that the focus be

not so much on the problem but the cause of the problem. So we don't pay teachers salaries, we give them cows that will last for many years! Our goal is to sponsor programs which will still bring value to the community after SMM leaves.

**Transparency:** Accountability and good stewardship develop trust and promote *success*. Donors have a right to have their gifts used wisely. Recipients need to know that they are receiving the resources intended to improve their situation.

**Clear exit timeline:** Remaining in one parish without any clear timeline leads to a comfortable but damaging co-dependent relationship fostering unrealistic expectations. We have found that 5 years is the right amount of time working with a parish.