

John F. Carter

St. John's Episcopal Church

January 24, 2010

Epiphany 3

## PRAYING FOR HAITI

*1 Corinthians 12*

“Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... If one member suffers, all suffer with it: if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

The world has responded to the catastrophe in Haiti as one body. Though it is not possible for us to fully comprehend the tragic enormity of what Haitians are experiencing, we still suffer and hurt with them. All rejoice also when someone is pulled out alive from the rubble. With millions of viewers on six continents and from 60 countries, the *“Hope for Haiti”* Telethon last Friday evening, gave powerful testimony to how we humans are capable of responding to others with extraordinary generosity and empathy. Though we may not often see evidence of it, we are one body.

The global response of compassion to Haiti is similar to that after 9/11 or following the tsunami in Indonesia. The body of Christ, the body of humanity, weeps and pulls together as one.

Local responses are also many and varied: James Taylor at the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington, a benefit concert on February 7<sup>th</sup> at the Housatonic Valley Regional High School, a gospel concert at Hotchkiss on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, another group of musicians from Hotchkiss here at St. John's in April, and many others grass roots efforts.

I would like to share with you a letter from Fr. Bruno who wrote from Haiti last Wednesday about his first hand experience with the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti on January 12<sup>th</sup>. An Episcopal priest, Fr. Bruno works as a missionary for Bethlehem Ministries with headquarters in GA. His base of operations is Terrier Rouge, a rural, mountainous, Haitian town. This letter describes his efforts to bring aid and relief to Port au Prince. Through the acts of compassion of others, we are connected to the body of Christ.

*Date: Wed, 20 Jan 2010 14:01:13 +0000*

*From: [BethlehemMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:BethlehemMinistry@gmail.com)*

*Subject: A message from Father Bruno*

Dear friends,

First of all, I want to praise the Lord who has allowed me to make the trip to Port-au-Prince and be back to Terrier Rouge. *Thank you* to all of you for your prayers and generosity. Thank you for accompanying the people of Haiti in their moment of trial. We urgently need your continued help.

I left Terrier Rouge on Sunday, the 17th (*5 days after earthquake*) at 5.00 am with a truck loaded with food for 250 families affected by the earthquake and 10 young volunteers. After eight hours on the road we arrived at the Capital of Haiti. Immediately, we started our relief work by visiting the most affected areas. I could not believe what I saw. The City where I grew up does not exist any longer. The Holy Trinity Cathedral, the Church attended by my family, the temple that witnessed my ordinations, was completely destroyed. My primary school and high school, where I had my education, were leveled. Most of the government buildings, including the National Palace, either were severely damaged or do not exist any longer.

One cannot describe the scene. One has to be there. TV coverage shows only part of the devastated Port-au-Prince.

I went to one of the Episcopal high schools, named College St. Pierre, to see the Bishop, and saw the damage. This school, which was the pride of the Diocese for their

academic performance, fell down and killed many students. In the courtyard, the Sisters of St. Margaret (*an Episcopal Order*), the Bishop and two other priests, along with more than a thousand people, took refuge there. They live under camping tents.

The Bishop was not there but I visited with the two priests. One of them was the Dean of the Seminary, The Very Rev. Oge Beauvois, who explained to me that they do not have the means to feed the people there. I promised him that I will send food for them this coming Friday (the 22<sup>nd</sup>).

Everywhere in Port-au-Prince people live in the streets or they use any park or space they can find. They sleep under the stars. Their temporary shelters are made of sheets, some of them recovered from the ruins. Praise the Lord it is not raining.

Tears came down as I was walking between the bodies of the dead who were still lying on the pedestrian walkway, waiting to be picked up by the truck to be buried in a common grave.

As I was walking I visited a community of 300 families gathered together on a small property without water, food and so on. They were practically dying. I stopped and was watching them. One man, who happens to be their leader, approached me and talked to me. He asked me for help for

those people. I agreed to provide food for them. Immediately, he gathered the community and we discussed how we would proceed. They formed a committee for the distribution. The next day we drove the truck there and they received the food, which was to be distributed. I gave them food for two hundred people but they told me that everybody will find something. They started reducing the packages we had prepared in Terrier Rouge, so instead of 200 families, 300 may have something to eat. They show a real concern for everyone.

The remaining 50 packages were distributed in the area where my family lives ... to the neighbors. With the volunteers, we participated in the recovery of the bodies of my cousin and her granddaughter who were under the ruins. After we found them, we buried them not too far from their destroyed home.

The needs are countless. Since the moment of the tragedy I felt that I had to intervene in one way or another to bring my support to fellow citizens. Families are leaving the Capital and are moving out to the country. I am helping also in this area. On our way back, the truck was loaded with people originally from Terrier Rouge whom we brought to their families.

What we are doing is very small compared to the massive aid that the international community is pouring into Haiti. But it is very significant in the sense that in distributing

our help we do not need an army to protect us. We use the channel of community leaders. We do it with discretion. Nobody has noticed that we are transporting food for the victims. There was no fight, no riot and everyone we reached received something. Neither the volunteers nor I ever felt threatened. On the contrary, we did our work with joy trusting in the Lord's power for protection.

When I had to leave for Port-au-Prince, there was no gasoline in the whole country. I crossed the border and talked to the DR (*Dominican Republic*) authorities in Dajabon and they allowed me to buy the quantity of diesel fuel I needed for the whole trip. The food also is bought there. So I do not have any problem to get the food to Port-au-Prince.

An idea of what I took to Port-au-Prince: rice, beans, corn, charcoal, oil, spaghetti, matches, cassava, bread, biscuits, candles, dry fish and water.

I am going back to Santo Domingo (Capital of DR) this Saturday after sending the truck again and will return next week to make another trip to Port-au-Prince.

I urge you to be part of this relief work. You can give to any organization of your choice but believe me any penny you give our Organization Esperance & Vie through Bethlehem Ministry will go right away to the suffering people. For the time being, school is closed in the whole country.

As I write this report, we are receiving an aftershock in Terrier Rouge, and this happens from time to time. Last night, the people in Cap-Haitien experienced the same phenomenon. People are still living in a very panicky situation. They do not want to take any chance to stay in their homes. We continue to count on your prayers and generosity.

Please forgive me for the length of this report.

This comes with the assurance of my prayers,

Your servant,

J M Bruno+