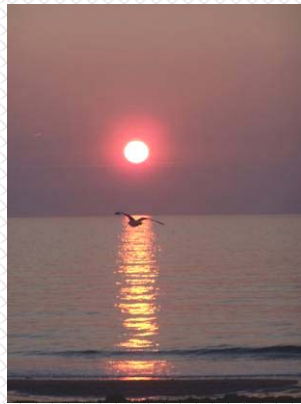


OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER

AUGUST, 2005

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish*:

This month's opening prayer is a personal meditation on *Seagull in the Sun*, a photograph taken by Kathleen Finnegan, our webmaster, at York Beach, Maine at dawn. As you contemplate the dawn of a new day, let the Spirit lead you in prayer and guide you to serve the Lord today:



OPERATION STARFISH CONFERENCE SET FOR OCTOBER

Pastors and church leaders will come together October 26-28, 2005 in Deerfield Beach, Florida to share their experiences with Operation Starfish and help guide the future of this simple fundraising concept for the benefit of the poor. At the suggestion of Fr. Richard Martin, who began the "Starfish" idea at Nativity Catholic Church in 1998, Food For The Poor, Inc. has agreed to host this gathering near its headquarters in Deerfield Beach.

An interdenominational planning committee is hard at work on the agenda and logistics for the meeting, which will take place at the *Hampton Inn Boca Raton-Deerfield Beach*, a small, quiet, well-appointed hotel that is a gem within the Hilton family. This Hampton Inn is ranked #3 in the country for service excellence. Participants will arrive on Wednesday, October 26, check in and meet each other at a hosted reception Wednesday evening.

Thursday morning will begin with an interdenominational prayer service and tour of Food For The Poor's headquarters operation. Discussions on Thursday will focus on individual experiences with Operation Starfish, highlighting the blessings that come to congregations as a result of ministering to the poor. Travel opportunities to third world countries will be presented by pilgrimage experts, and a menu of project opportunities will also be described.

Throughout the day, feedback and expectations will be actively sought from participants. The evening will end with a dinner, hosted by Food For The Poor.

On Friday morning, there will be small group discussions on a variety of topics, including how to motivate congregations and how to involve children in programs to assist the poor. The future of Operation Starfish will be an important discussion topic.

The Operation Starfish Conference will end at noon on Friday, October 28. Transportation will be provided to Ft. Lauderdale Airport for those who are returning home Friday afternoon.

If you have tried Operation Starfish in your parish, congregation or school, or if you are considering trying it in the future, this is a great opportunity to network with others of a like mind. For more information on how you might participate, contact:

Barbara Fazekas, barbf@foodforthe poor.com, 954-427-2222 x6258, or
Jim McDaniel, jamesm@foodforthe poor.com, 954-415-7723

We'd love to see you in Florida in October!

CONDITIONS IN HAITI: A CHILL WIND BLOWS

Stability remains elusive, especially in the Port-au-Prince area. Agence France Presse reports two Haitian police officers killed this past week in Cité Soleil, immediately followed by 50 arrests of people thought to be implicated in the murders. Presse Canadienne reported the killing of a Canadian citizen during a kidnapping attempt in Port-au-Prince, a sign of the increasing targeting of foreigners in the capital. And in acts of frustration and vengeance, residents of the slum areas of Bel Air and Cité Soleil have lynched and hacked to death at least 15 bandits in the last 2 weeks. According to Reuters, the United Nations has condemned both the armed violence by gangs that control large areas of the slums, as well as the violent retribution being exacted by the slum dwellers.

Police and U.N. troops do not venture deeply into Cité Soleil and Bel Air. The U.N., however, has become somewhat more assertive. Recently, some 1,400 U.N. troops conducted a 12-hour raid into Cité Soleil. The raid became a bloody gunfight that killed Emmanuel "Dread" Wilme, a gang leader and 6 of his followers. 27 bystanders were also wounded.

Travel to Haiti by American church groups has been curtailed. Some organizations are still going into the rural areas, but they avoid Port-au-Prince. David Burr, of St. Mary's Church, Blacksburg, Virginia, traveled to Haiti this past March and he reports that "the mood is definitely more menacing."

On the positive side, many projects are still proceeding. The Haitian people have always had an ability to work around adversity. They find creative ways to move building materials and get work done. It is incumbent on us to maintain the level of support that lets them know they are not alone. We can learn a lot about hope and optimism from our Haitian brothers and sisters. We keep them in our prayers.

HAITIAN WISDOM

Papa,
Li sanble ke yon van fret angoudi nou.
Vlope noun an lèn pawòl ou e chofe nou.

Father,
A cold wind seems to have chilled us.
Wrap us in the blanket of your Word and warm us up.

NATIVITY VILLAGE UPDATE

Last month Fr. Wedner Berard reported that the construction of Nativity Village School was underway and he sent some photos showing the site work and foundation walls being built. Because of the dangerous conditions on the road out of Port-au-Prince, work has slowed down somewhat because it has been difficult to get materials and workers to the site. As opportunities present themselves, work is accelerated, but the construction schedule is impacted by the violent environment in the city. So far, this violence has not extended to Nativity Village.

With the completion of housing units for all 500 families in Nativity Village, attention has now moved to the school, vocational training, chicken farm, and small business elements of the development.

Fr. Martin wanted to share this drawing he received from a 6-year-old parishioner of Nativity Church. The image speaks volumes about how Operation Starfish has reached our children...



CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST

In the middle of summer our thoughts may well be on beaches and sunshine. But our friends at Food For The Poor are working hard on materials to support Operation Starfish projects during Advent. The first Operation Starfish was conducted during Lent, 1998 at Church of the Nativity in Burke, Virginia. Since then, many other churches, schools and organizations have completed Lenten Starfish campaigns. But some churches have chosen Advent as a time to do a Starfish campaign. So Food For The Poor will have Advent calendars and other supportive materials available for the asking to assist organizations that want to do a Starfish project at Christmas time.

To find out more about an Advent Starfish project, contact Barbara Fazekas, Manager, Church and School Development, Food For The Poor: barbf@foodforthe poor.com, 954-427-2222 x6258.

THE BLESSINGS OF OPERATION STARFISH

We often speak of the blessings that come back to individuals and congregations that have gotten involved with the poor, through Operation Starfish or otherwise. One of these blessings is the expansion of the capacity for giving, even in small churches and schools without a lot of resources. It seems that once a congregation really gets involved with giving to the poor, they become energized and their capacity for giving gets larger and larger.

There is a sense of joy that comes back to us when we are making a difference in the lives of others, so we want to keep helping. God keeps putting new opportunities in our path, and we trust Him to help us find the resources that are needed. At Nativity Church, one of the latest opportunities was a Diocesan Youth Camp in Kumbo, Cameroon.

Fr. Daniel Ache, youth director for the Kumbo Diocese, met Nativity parishioners while passing through Virginia last year enroute to a Catholic Youth Conference in Pittsburgh, his first visit to the U.S. The Arlington, Virginia Diocese and Nativity Church had sponsored Fr. Daniel's trip after having heard about the great work he was doing with young people in Africa. Fr. Daniel, even though he was at Nativity for a short time, jumped in with both feet, helping with masses, visiting the sick, and making friends with his warmth and his beautiful smile. He is truly a happy priest, loving his ministry and all God's children.

Nativity parishioners, who have developed a love of the poor, and a sense of obligation to God's chosen ones, quickly got behind the idea of a Youth Camp in Cameroon to bring practical health aid and a renewed respect for the Eucharist to the young people of the area. Both the Diocese and Nativity Church provided resources to help Fr. Daniel feed and house the 495 young people registered for the camp.

Fr. Daniel wrote recently to thank the Diocese and Nativity for their support and he described a week-long experience that was very successful. In his own words, Fr. Daniel said, "We had in all 710 participants at the camp. 495 were registered participants. 215 were not able to raise money for their registration. We kept them in spite of that because the course content of the camp – Youth, Health and the Eucharist – was too important a topic for us to ignore the plight of those who loved to be at it in spite of their inability to come up for the cost."

Fr. Daniel further stated, "On some days they [the youth] cleaned up the homes of the old and disabled of the locality. In all, it was a very successful camp for which on behalf of all the youth of the Diocese of Kumbo, I say thank you to all of you for contributing to make the camp such a success story. Once more, thank you all so much and may God Bless You all."

It's a wonderful feeling to know that half a world away, we have made a difference again. We have helped provide a few more loaves and fishes; a few more starfish have been saved; and the joy is ours.

AUGUST PRAYER REQUESTS

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

† For Bettye Castro, may her recuperation from hip surgery be quick and fully successful, and for her husband Nash, that his upcoming knee surgery bring relief and a quick return to the golf course;

† In appreciation to all who worked to make the Diocesan Youth Camp in Kumbo, Cameroon a success, and in thanksgiving to God for the blessings He has given to the youngsters and all involved;

† For a measure of God's comfort and compassion for the family of Mary Lunney, sister-in-law of Sr. Francis Annice;

† For Natacha Hines, as she continues her treatment program, that her health be fully restored;

† For Terry Moore, that God wrap His loving arms around Terry and his family as they weather the storm of illness;

† For Joe Mahfood, as he begins his treatment, may God grant him improving health;

† 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, that the violence may subside, and that the international community come together to help bring the people back on their feet and the land back to life;

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

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@foodforthepeer.com. Web: www.foodforthepeer.org.

CLOSING THOUGHT...

Men anpil, chay pa lou

With many hands, the load is not heavy

Haitian Proverb

God Bless You...

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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Edited this month by Jim McDaniel (info@starfishmission.org)

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