

**CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY'S
OPERATION STARFISH® NEWSLETTER
JUNE, 2007**

Dear Friends of *Operation Starfish®*:

We begin with a prayer ...

"How beautiful you are, O God! You fill our lives with goodness and love, and surround us with angels to care for us. While we have little, we are rich, for we have each other's love. Sometimes when we have nothing, you provide for us still what we need each day. Your blessings are overflowing. Your plans for us are full of wonder, as we see how you touch our lives and the lives of all we meet. When we contemplate your ways, they are hard to understand, but when we see how they unfold, we stand in awe at the tenderness of your love."

From Joshua's Family by Joseph F. Girzone

HOPE REALIZED!

"What we see here is HOPE REALIZED," said Fr. Richard Martin, Pastor of Nativity Catholic Church, as the first fishing village project in Haiti was dedicated last month. Food For The Poor, Inc., the third largest international charity in the U.S., opened 3 new fishing villages on Haiti's north coast during 2 days of pageantry and celebration. FFTP President Robin Mahfood stated, "We want to ring the coast of Haiti with Fishing Villages and make a big impact on the problem of hunger and malnutrition in this country."



The first of the 3 new fishing co-op's is located at Petit-Anse, just east of downtown Cap-Haitien, Haiti's second largest city. Nativity parishioners had visited this village last year and decided to fund a fishing village here after seeing first hand the desperate need for food and jobs. On their initial visit, Fr. Martin and his group spoke with a fisherman who had spent all day on the water and had only a pound of tiny fingerling fish to show for it. Today, the crews of the 4 new boats at Petit-Anse are bringing in several hundred pounds of large queen snapper and kingfish every day!

The "Fishing Village" model is one that FFTP has used successfully in Jamaica for several years. Each "Village" is provided with 4 boats (24' fiberglass dories) and 40 h.p. outboard motors. A gear shed is built and all equipment needed for deep water fishing is provided. Three families are assigned to each boat and the fishermen are trained in modern fishing techniques, environmental and safety procedures, and business management. FFTP project managers and technical experts monitor and assist the fishermen throughout the first year or so of operation.

Nativity's contribution also includes a larger boat, the "John B," which is used as a training vessel for all the fishing village projects. The "John B" also has up-to-date GPS and "fish finder" electronics and is mapping the deep water fishing grounds in the ocean along the north coast. The remaining 4 boats in the Petit-Anse village are named after members of Fr. Martin's family in honor of the 40th anniversary of his ordination in 2006.

Archbishop Hubert Constant, O.M.I., of the Diocese of Cap-Haitien, was accompanied by Fr. Martin, Fr. Duken Augustin, and other clergy and government officials as he blessed the new boats and commissioned the fishermen and their families in this venture. Nativity parishioners and FFTP staff joined with hundreds of villagers to celebrate the fact that their HOPE for a better future has now been REALIZED. The Archbishop later hosted a dinner at his residence for the FFTP/Nativity delegation.

Additional Fishing Village projects were opened at Bord-de-Mer and Fort Liberté. One of these projects was funded by a woman from Chicago whose mother had left her an inheritance. She decided to take 50% of it and build a fishing village in memory of her Mom. All of those present were overwhelmed with emotion when each fisherman came up to her at the dedication and thanked her for saving the lives of their families and neighbors with her generosity.

At Fort Liberté, Bishop Chibly Langlois led the Nativity group in a parade from his residence to the beach, as the new boats arrived by sea. Accompanied by a marching band, the parade of villagers met the fleet with pageantry and cheers. The new boats at Fort Liberté are named "Faith," "Hope," "Peace," and "Love."

On June 9th, FFTP's Robin Mahfood announced that 3 additional fishing villages are under development, including a second village funded by Nativity Church through its 2007 Operation Starfish® campaign.

SEE THE VIDEO AT:

<http://boss.streamos.com/download/foodforthe poor/ffp/haitifishing1.wmv>

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CHURCH GOES FISHIN'

-by Rev. Glen W. Borhart, Senior Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Marengo, IL

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Provide a village with a fish pond and you feed them for a lifetime.*



The members of Zion Lutheran Church and School have some tall fish stories to tell from this last Lenten and Easter season. It all started when Pastor Paul Sutterer, a retired pastor called from Florida and asked if he could preach and share the

ministries of Food For The Poor, Inc. A part of their mission statement, in part, is: *“Our mission is to link the church of the First World with the church of the Third World in a manner that helps both the materially poor and the poor in spirit. . . . Ultimately, we seek to bring both benefactors and recipients to a closer union with our Lord.”* This organization seeks to help the poorest of the poor. Pastor Sutterer’s message and loving concern for the poor and for us was a spark to ignite a desire to do more. (Food for the Poor, Inc. is a good steward of gifts it receives. 96% of every dollar given directly benefits those in need.)

The fish story continued as I went to the www.foodforthe poor.org website. There are many different ministries described. The one that attracted my attention was about Tilapia fish ponds in Haiti. For the past few years I have enjoyed raising fish in tanks ranging from ten gallon aquariums to one hundred gallon cow tanks to a six hundred gallon tank I built in my garden. For the most part, I have goldfish and colorful koi ranging from two to twelve inches long – and growing. I hoped that by putting together my fish with this project, the Lord would bless our efforts.

The goal set for us was \$6,500. This would be the cost of digging the ponds, training the people, and supplying the start-up materials. Tilapia farms generally consist of at least three ponds that are rotated between stages of reproduction, nurturing fingerlings, and harvesting mature Tilapia for distribution. The entire process, from start to finish, takes from four to six months depending on the temperature. Once the fish have grown to about a pound they will be ready for market.

The average size of the ponds being developed by Food For The Poor is 5,000 square feet, which can accommodate nearly 7,000 fish. A portion of the catch will be used to feed the needy in the town where the farm is located. The remaining fish will be sold in the surrounding communities at affordable prices to ensure that it is easily accessible to the residents. Still, enough income will be generated to pay operating expenses of the farm and reinvest back into the production process.

At first I thought of getting some small Tilapia and putting them in a tank in the narthex of the church. After a few phone calls, I decided it would be easier to use my own fish as the object lesson. For Ash Wednesday I set up a fifty gallon aquarium in the narthex with six goldfish and koi. We also handed out coin banks supplied to us from Food For The Poor. The idea was to have our families place their loose change in the banks during Lent. We also printed envelopes for the project and placed them near the tank. A seven page pamphlet describing the project was also set beside the aquarium.

The children of the congregation and school loved looking at the fish. A day has not gone by that I haven’t talked to a child about the fish. Adults too, have asked many questions, given helpful hints and teased me about my fish. Throughout Lent I kept exchanging the fish in the tank with my other fish at home. Some of the children were fascinated with how fast the fish seemed to grow.

As far as I am concerned, March 7th was one of the most important days of the entire project. My grandson, Blaine, turned seven on that day. It was a Wednesday and we had our usual Lenten worship service. One of our family friends had given Blaine a birthday card with \$10 inside. He took the money out of the card, went over to the fish display and took one of the Tilapia envelopes and put his \$10 inside. I had thought of explaining to him the idea of tithing

his gift, but if he was willing to give 100% – good for him. (Right or wrong – I proudly shared this example with the congregation in our weekly bulletin.)

When we handed out the coin banks I told the congregation to bring them back at Easter time. To my surprise, money began to come in through the weekly offerings. A few hundred dollars would be added to the total every week. I began to put white Christian fish decals on the outside of the tank. Each decal represented \$1,000. The Ladies Aid of Zion gave \$250 from a supper they had hosted. During Lutheran Schools Week, the parents and grandparents at V.I.P. Day gave over \$600. In the middle of Lent we had two, then three and soon four thousand dollars. The banks were not even beginning to be returned. As we neared Easter, the banks started coming back. We would empty them and count the money every week and add it to the total. Soon we had five thousand. During Holy Week and Easter over \$2,000 was given with the offerings alone. By the Sunday after Easter, there were eight fish decals on the tank.

I am thankful the Lord blessed our project. Once again, our members, young and old, were given the opportunity to help someone else in Jesus' name. I feel it is very important for us to look beyond ourselves and find ways to serve the Lord by helping others. I am thankful to Food For The Poor for doing the work we could never do. Zion's fish story is really one that will have no ending. With God's blessing, we are a part of feeding a village of God's people, not one time but for a lifetime.

NATIVITY'S 2007 OPERATION STARFISH® GIFT - \$211,572.77

In a "Thankful Thursday" ceremony at Food For The Poor's Florida headquarters in May, Pastor Richard Martin of Nativity Catholic Church presented a check in the amount of \$211,572.77 to FFTP President Robin Mahfood. Together with an earlier \$13,000 gift, Nativity's Operation Starfish® program this year raised nearly \$225,000 to aid the poor of Haiti. Since Operation Starfish® began at Nativity in 1998, parishioners have donated over \$1.6 million to FFTP.



In presenting this year's gift, Fr. Martin said, "Robin, as you know, I continue to be so very proud of my parishioners. They are truly the hands and feet of Christ, reaching out to the poor. And I am also very proud of you and your staff, as you carefully use the resources we provide to minister to those who are so destitute. Together, we are living out the love in our hearts, and receiving the blessings that only the poor can give to us."

In his response, Mr. Mahfood stated, "I would appreciate it if you would extend to everyone at the Church of the Nativity our sincerest appreciation for all they continue to do for the poorest of the poor. Without the help of your parish, there would be countless numbers of God's poor living in the most desperate conditions imaginable. We are so grateful that He chose you and the people of your parish to join with us in our fight against poverty, and we thank you for being the shepherd who has guided and encouraged so many to do His work."

With this year's gift from Nativity, FFTP will develop another fishing village, fund school tuitions at Nativity's projects in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, and start building houses, water wells

and sanitation at La Linea, a frontier village along the Haitian border with the Dominican Republic.

NATIVITY SCHOOL DEDICATED IN HAITI

A new 2-story, 10-classroom school building was blessed and dedicated in a ceremony last month at Nativity Village at Merger, near Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince. Fr. Richard Martin, along with FFTP President Robin Mahfood and local parish priest Fr. Jean Printemps, conducted the simple ceremony during a visit by Nativity parishioners.



The primary school has been open since September, 2006, but because of safety concerns, Nativity parishioners have not been able to visit until now. What they saw during their stopover was a vibrant and thriving school of 400 students, resplendent in new uniforms that match the colors of the painted building.

According to Fr. Printemps, many children still are unable to go to school because they can't afford the \$52 annual cost. This is a problem on the way to being solved by the children in Nativity's school and C.C.D. program. During Lent, 2007, Nativity students here in the U.S. raised over \$13,000 to be administered by FFTP in a fund drawn on by Fr. Printemps and Fr. Duken in Cap-Haitien. This fund will allow more than 250 additional Haitian children to attend school this coming year.

The Haitian priests are using innovative means to provide additional space for school. At Merger, Fr. Printemps is constructing a vocational training center for multi-use, and in Cap-Haitien Fr. Duken is using the Fishing Village gear shed as school space during the day when the boats are at sea.

If you would like to send a Haitian child to school through this program, your gift of \$52 would be welcome. Make a check payable to "Operation Starfish – School Tuition" and send it to Nativity Church, 6400 Nativity Lane, Burke, VA 22015.

GROWING THROUGH SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

By Fr. Mike Hann, CICM, Cursillo Spiritual Director

Spiritual direction has many parallels in life's journey. Let me share with you my experience with spiritual direction. I am a fisherman's son. I lived my first 16 years with my family by the sea in the province of Newfoundland, Canada. Although the ocean temperature was always rather chilly, there was a short period in the summer months when we could go swimming, if you could take 40 degree ocean water temperatures. I taught myself how to swim by following the movements of the family pet as it swam, a rather rudimentary dog paddle, but effective.

As I grew older and went to college I had the chance to take an elective in swimming and lifesaving. My professor taught me how to take my minimal knowledge of swimming and, under his care, I became a first rate swimmer. As a result, I worked for many summers as a lifeguard

and swimming instructor at an institute for disturbed and underprivileged children. I earned enough to pay my college expenses. College tuition was not very expensive in those days. My swimming teacher became not only my teacher in swimming but also my "soul - friend" who accompanied me during my years in college and beyond. Over a period of time we became relaxed with each other and I could open my heart to him about my family, my faith, my confusions about God, about church and my future. We discussed many things and I never needed a mask while with him; I was myself. He became my echo. He echoed back my reflections, and the direction I should take was becoming clearer.

As I was approaching graduation I began to see that there was something lacking in my life, a space that wasn't being filled. I wanted more; I felt there was an inner yearning I needed to take a look at. I can say I had a rather simple faith based mostly on devotions and an ordinary relationship with God. I attended Church on an irregular basis. With the help of my swimming instructor, my soul-friend, I was accompanied through a discernment process and the end result pointed me in the direction of another type of institute, a religious missionary congregation. He was with me the day I entered to become a missionary and a religious. In the religious institute I was fortunate to meet a confrere who took on a similar role as my soul-friend at college. My religious soul-friend accompanied me throughout my studies and spiritual growth and, in spite of some very rough times, I made it through to ordination a somewhat joyful and fulfilled person.

Over the years, as a missionary in several countries, I became very much aware of God's presence with me and it amazed me how often He showed up in people I loved and situations in which I lived and worked. My soul-friends pointed me to prayer and study early on so as to let my faith open my life to God's loving presence. The Lord took on the role of soul-friend and I knew He would always be there through the good and bad times.

Now I am back at the community where I started my missionary journey. My earlier soul-friend is still around and we picked up where we left off, with many years to catch up on. I would have had a difficult time over the years if God had not put some special mentors, reflectors and guides in my life as spiritual directors. Through them God has touched my life in a profound way. Thank you, Lord.

Do you have a "soul-friend" to accompany you? And would you be one for another sojourner?

"WE PRAY FOR YOU EVERY DAY"

By Sue Carlson, M.D.

Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Arlington, Virginia has a twin parish in Medor, Haiti. Recently, Fr. Leroy, pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Medor visited OLQP Parish to report on progress made in education and health care through the support of OLQP parishioners.



The elementary and secondary schools in Medor now enroll 758 students. Another 500 students are enrolled in two outlying chapel schools. OLQP is supporting the education of over 1,250 students and employing 34 teachers! The students are doing very well in school. Last year, of the 22 St. Joseph students who took the high school qualifying exam, 12 passed. Compare this with the 7 out of 200 who passed from the public school system in the area.

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

The school lunch program provides each student and teacher in Medor with a hot lunch. Pere Leroy states that the benefits from this and the de-worming medicines provided by OLQP are obvious. One glance at the children shows that they are more energetic and less frail than they were just 3 years ago.

A water purification program was initiated during the past year. OLQP arranged for 2 hydrologists to go to Medor to guide the project. They found that all of the water sources are contaminated with fecal bacteria. With funds from OLQP, 3 of the 30 water sources have been capped, allowing fresh water to be drawn from them without surface contamination. We have also begun an in-home water purification program. We have distributed two hundred chlorination systems and plan to distribute 6,000 more to reach all households in the community. The health clinic has reported a reduced incidence of diarrhea complaints since the 3 initial wells were capped and the first round of bucket/spigot/chlorination systems were distributed.

In the coming year, OLQP and St. Joseph's in Medor plan to:

- Continue the support for the primary and secondary schools. There are plans to add a 10th grade class to the College of Our Lady Secondary School.

- Continue the school lunch program.

- Construction of a new teachers' residence. The current teachers' home has major structural flaws and is no longer safe for habitation. Many of the teachers in Medor come from various cities outside of Medor and therefore need housing.

- Initiate the construction of a new secondary school building to be ready in 2009. There are now 120 children attending kindergarten in Medor. The school had to turn away 50 new kindergarten age children due to lack of space. Pere Leroy hopes to enlarge the kindergarten program and thus eventually the entire school program. He proposes to build a new secondary school and to convert the current secondary school building into a kindergarten complex.

- Move forward with the water project. We want to provide all 6,000 families in the community with a chlorination system for in-home water purification.

- As sanitation and deforestation affect the purity of water, these factors need to be addressed. The Haiti Committee submitted a grant application to UNICEF for the initiation of a latrine project. Work is being done to investigate a reforestation project around the water sources. As progress is made on these initiatives, the cleanliness of the water sources in Medor will improve.

In the 9 years that OLQP has been twinned with St. Joseph Parish in Medor there have been great strides in the education and the health of the community. Through the generosity of the parishioners of OLQP we hope to continue these initiatives.

Before he returned to Haiti Pere Leroy said "In Medor we never cease to pray for you every day; you are always on our lips and in our thoughts. We don't yet know the words to show our gratitude for all of your assistance for the community of Medor. We say simply, 'Thanks be to God' for putting Medor on its way. We count on you and you can count on us, because God listens to the prayers of the poor."

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

How often do you go to Google or Yahoo! to do an internet search? Do you realize that these search engines generate billions of dollars in advertising revenue? Well now there is a way to direct a small amount from every search toward your favorite charity. Powered by Yahoo!, the new search engine www.GoodSearch.com will split 50% of its ad revenue with non-profits. This works out to about one penny per search.

We have listed Nativity's Operation Starfish as a benefiting charity. 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.

If you have any questions, please let us know. Meanwhile, good searching!!!

APRIL PRAYER REQUESTS

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

† For the family of Theresa Coursey, mother of Michele McDaniel, that God grant them a measure of comfort in their loss;

† For Margaret Anton, that she be granted a full measure of the healing power of God, and for her family;

† For Fr. Daniel Gee and Fr. Chris Murphy, and those they serve in the Dominican Republic, that God grant them strength, courage and the resources they need to continue their mission work;

† For continuing healing and peace for the family of Mr. John B. Martin on this the 1st anniversary of his return to God's Heavenly Kingdom;

† For the family of Kathy Davis, that they feel the full extent of God's love and compassion;

† For Fr. Daniel Ache and those he serves in Cameroon, that God bless him and his people with encouragement;

† For Mr. & Mrs. Gus Montecalvo of Rhode Island;

† For Paige Roberatory, that she be blessed with God's healing grace;

† For Daniel Herd and Delane Bailey, who have joined in holy matrimony and dedicated their marriage to God, to each other, and to the poor;

† For Terry Moore, that God's loving kindness continue to bless him and his family;

† For Normand Gariepy, that he gain strength and healing with each passing day;

† For Pauline Girard, that her recovery be swift and complete;

† For Sr. Francis Annice, and her family, as they deal with the loss of a wonderful brother;

† For individuals who are hurting, families that are divided, and nations at war, may the peace of Christ be felt by all those who struggle;

† 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, who struggle against all odds to get back on their feet and to bring their land back to life;

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

HAITIAN WISDOM

Senyè

**Kè nou tankou yon depo
Pou tout zouti
Ke nou bezwen pouf è travay nou.**

Bouch nou se pòt depo a.

Mete nan kè nou zouti lamou ak lagras.

Lord,

**Our hearts are like a storeroom
For all the tools needed to do our work.**

Our mouths are the door to the storeroom.

Put in our hearts the tools of love and grace.

---Courtesy of Baptist Haiti Mission

VISIT US ON THE WEB

Please visit us at www.operation-starfish.org . We would appreciate your comments and suggestions. Feel free to contact us at info@operation-starfish.org.

For information on Food For The Poor's programs in Haiti, contact Barbara Fazekas at 954-427-2222 x6258; barbf@foodforthe poor.com. Web: www.foodforthe poor.org.

CLOSING THOUGHT...

"Kidogo na kidoga na gaza icibanda."

Little by little makes it full

---Ugandan proverb, courtesy Rev. Andrew Amaruma

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.

OPERATION STARFISH NEWSLETTER (Vol. VI, Issue 3), June 2007: 0706newsitr.doc
Edited this month by Jim McDaniel (seastar2004@msn.com)

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