

Haiti May 2013 Trip Report

Travelers: Anne Alexander, Ann Adams, Philippe Dumoulin, Deacon Roger Fraser
Interpreter: Ernsö Sylvian

Saturday May 11

Anne, Ann and Roger met Philippe and Ernsö at PAP airport at 2:30PM. Picked up Hertz SUV and drove to Philippe's sister Florence's place of work for a brief visit. Road from PAP to Hinche was very smooth, but the 1st 10 miles entering mountains was dicey due to over-loaded truck heavy traffic. Saw many encouraging signs of improvement in Haiti, in spite of evidence of how difficult life is there and how food is in limited supply, but the most impressive were the numerous ways people were the Body of Christ for each other.

The road to Bassin-Zim was recently improved; it was still rocks and gravel, but the former 45 minute trip from Hinche, now only took 15 minutes. Let me observe with some pride that roads are not improved going to dying or dead areas of the country. Secondly, cell phone service was strong... unheard of 3 years ago. But, it also didn't take long to recognize they still did not have a reliable water supply...well water and city water were intermittent. Scooping from a 5-gallon bucket was necessary to bathe for a few days...it took some getting used to the uncertainty of having water when it was needed. Arrived in BZ at 7:30PM...beautiful rectory and lights in the trees!!

MANGOS ARE IN SEASON!!

Fr. Meres introduced the Hinche Chief of Police. Philippe discussed meeting with the Cumming Police Chief and a policeman who was a Haitian-national. They suggested an exchange program be established to bring officers from Hinche to Cumming for a "train-the-trainer" session. The Cumming officers would travel to Hinche to exchange ideas and assist in training classes.

Sunday May 12

Mass in the morning was a wonderful precursor to the feast day Mass.

Helped set up the Social Hall for the feast day luncheon.

Monday May 13

The feast day Mass was remarkable with the church overflowing with more than a 1000 joyous people...Bishop St. Hillien of Hinche presided with 42 priests, 8 nuns, 4 Deacons, 9 liturgical dancers, and several local dignitaries in attendance. The music was spectacular with everyone joining in...and fortunately it was recorded...we hope to soon have a link posted on the HaitiReach web site for all to hear! With Philippe's help, I was privileged to share the Good News in a homily that emphasized Fr. Mere's theme of the feast: the Blessed Virgin Mary is the star of the new evangelization and teaches us the faith that her son Jesus is Christ the Lord. While we are thousands of miles apart in Bassin-Zim, Haiti and Cumming, GA, our communities are closely linked spiritually. Both Bishop St. Hillien and Father Meres spoke about "the storm that is now passed". The Bishop firmly, Father Meres, emotionally.

- Met with Fr. Meres to discuss:
 - Additional school land purchase for future expansion and possibly a residence for teacher or administrator.
 - Reasons for no interest in the SILC investing program.
 - Shoe distribution.
 - Letter from Bishop St. Hillien along Fr. Meres to visit St. B as a Priest. Roger will scan the letter and return by email so the Bishop can send to Archbishop Gregory.
- At 9:30PM Met with Wildy and Nerley of Hinche Rotary regarding the \$20,000 school well/cistern, latrines and wash stations; the \$30,000, and getting the grant application signed. Bernard has a drilling company willing to guarantee the well performance during the dry season before the well invoice is paid. Wildy requested final quotes and contracts be submitted for Rotary to accept, sign and release money sent from Rotary International.

Tuesday May 14

Busy day:

- Madame Smith set up her marketplace for us to buy, statues, metal art, canvas paintings, book marks, embroidered bags, baskets, table cloths...and more!
- Mark Coughlin, his 3 brothers and 4 Bostonians hosted an eyeglass clinic. Assisted 170 people with mostly reading but also some prescription glasses.
- Fed the poor under the cashew tree: Morning bread and coffee and then for Lunch they brought buckets and containers to receive rice, red beans and eggplant. Took all morning to cook lovingly.
- Visited Odines' Farm outside of Hinche. He modestly showed us how his farm has expanded with hundreds of plantain and banana trees. The two oxen were plowing a field preparing to plant rotating crops of peanuts and peppers. He has been hiring seasonal labor from neighbors in Bassin-Zim...up to 25 at a time!
- Visited Philippe's Sister's farm between Hinche and Thomonde. Had freshly squeezed lemonade and coconut water directly from the coconut.

Wednesday May 15

Busy day #2:

- Five school grades now in session in the Social Hall. School was out for the feast, but can you imagine, 110 students, 4 teachers and the Principal met with us to do a project together: tracing two hands, writing their names and what they want to be when they grow up. Our St. B's children in Vacation Bible School this summer will join the activity to trace their hands. Then two chains of hands from both groups will be made; one for BZ and one for St. B's.
- Visited the school building site. Phase 2 wall construction will begin this week! Saw the extra land that Fr. Meres wants to buy.
- Visited OLF reservoir which will be stocked with fish.
- Drove to Hinche to visit:
 - Concrete Block manufacturing yard where the school blocks were ready for delivery.

- Visited Mother Teresa's Sisters of Charity Nutrition Clinic (a.k.a, Hospice). Anne, Ann, Philippe and Ernso visited the babies upstairs.[Not going to mention the Exorcist vomit?]
- Stopped to see the mother of the Atlanta-based Consulate General of Haiti, Gandy Thomas.
- Stopped at the Papaye retreat center to meet Bishop Monsignor St. Hillen. He asked that we help find professors fluent in French who could visit to teach Nursing or Biology at the start-up Hinche location of The University Notre Dame of Haiti, a Roman Catholic university headquartered in PAP. It was founded in 1995 and is organized in five facilities.
 - Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
 - Faculty of Economical, Social and Political Sciences
 - Faculty of Administrative Sciences - Cap-Haïtien
 - Faculty of Agriculture - Cayes
 - Faculty of Administrative Sciences – Jacmel

Thursday May 16

Left BZ at 8AM following Fr. Meres to PAP. Stopped at Fr. Meres mother and father's house in Thomonde to say goodbye. Arrived at PAP Airport ~11:15AM after encountering heavy traffic upon entering PAP. Anne, Ann and Roger departed on 1:10PM flight. Philippe continued on to visit his family in Petionville in the mountains above PAP.