

# The Haitian Times

## STAFF INCREASES AT NMH

A long time friend of Norwich Mission House recently returned to Haiti and has begun work as full time assistant to Fr. Gerry. Merisier Nougaisse, more commonly known as Maiz, grew up in an orphanage in Port-au-Prince and attended school near NMH. As a result of his relationship with a family in the States, Maiz was able to attend college in upstate New York and recently graduated with a double major in History and Social Studies, as well as a minor in Mathematics.

Maiz's duties at NMH will involve scheduling itineraries for visiting delegations, accompanying them during their stay with us as well as assisting with some administrative responsibilities at NMH. He also will be invaluable in his ability to translate for guests and in offering his unique insights into Haitian life and culture. We are grateful for Maiz's return to Haiti and for his willingness to work with us and with the parishes and projects with which we are associated. We look forward to his involvement with us in the months and years ahead.

**Byen vini, Maiz!**

## DEATH MOURNED, LIVES CELEBRATED

Death is part of every life, as we were reminded very poignantly these past few months. It is with deep sadness and great hope in God's promise of life eternal that we inform you of the death of Joanne Whitehouse

Joanne Whitehouse, a member of our Haitian Ministries Board of Directors, died March sixth after struggling and suffering with cancer for several months. Joanne was a strong supporter of the Haitian Ministries Office for the Diocese of Norwich and of Norwich Mission House. She had hoped to return to Haiti at least one more time before her death, but was unable to fulfill that dream. Joanne created the website for our ministry and served as our webmaster until her death. Donations in memory of Joanne have been made to the **Tierney -Tobin Memorial Scholarship Fund**. To date \$7,600 has been given in her honor. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed so generously to this important part of Joanne's life.

We give thanks for her life and for the many ways in which she shared it so abundantly with

everyone who knew her. She will be greatly missed. We also are thankful to her husband and son, who have graciously offered to continue our website and serve as webmasters for us. **Please remember Joanne and her family in your prayers as we celebrate the fullness of life that Easter promises.**

## MEDICAL HELP EXPANDS

As a result of our continued contact with Haitian clinics and communities, we have become ever more aware of the need for even minimal healthcare for the majority of Haiti's poor. At the same time, our contacts within the Diocese of Norwich and beyond have expanded over the years. Given these two factors, NMH has begun organizing medical clinics throughout the greater Port-au-Prince area. These clinics not only provide medical care for the poor (consultation, medication, minor surgery, basic follow-up) but also allows for physicians, nurses, and physician assistants to offer their services where they are most needed, thus allowing for continued growth and development in their own lives.

This winter two Connecticut doctors, an anesthesiologist and a surgeon also visited us. While here they visited various medical sites in the hope that they will be able to return and begin performing outpatient surgery for the poor of Haiti. We are grateful for their visit and pray that this dream will be realized in the near future.

**“Yon sèl dwèt pa manje kalalou” (“One person cannot do it all.”) – a Haitian proverb**

## HARGUS FUND AWARDS GRANTS

Thanks to the generosity of one of our long time benefactors, Dr. Edward Hargus, we were able to establish an Orphanage Support Fund a couple of years ago. With an initial investment of \$56,000.00, the fund was established to provide ongoing assistance to orphanages that we support in Port-au-Prince. The interest from the Hargus fund allowed us to award \$2,000.00 grants to La Maison L'Arc-en-Ciel and to Foyer des Filles des Dieu this past winter. We are very grateful to Dr. Hargus for establishing this fund and we share his hope that others will invest in it. In this way, as the fund grows, the interest available to benefit orphaned children also will increase each year. **Contributions to the Hargus Orphanage Support Fund can be made through the Office of Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich.**

## SPEAKERS CONTINUE TO ENRICH OUR LIVES

We remain very grateful to our friends in Port-au-Prince who continue to respond to our requests to speak to visiting delegations. The wealth of wisdom, and variety of experiences and insights that they share with us truly is both enriching and life changing. The questions they raise are thought provoking and necessary if any real change is to occur in our lives, the life of Haiti or the life of the world.

We thank speakers old and new for the time they spend with us and the gift they are to us. Those who grace our home include Fr. Hugo Trieste, Fr. Roger Desir, George Wurleigh, Fr. John Hanssns, Ron Voss and Sr. Marthe Vonrompay. We also appreciate the time that our project directors take to welcome and speak with the many groups who travel to Haiti. The time they spend informing us and enriching our lives is greatly appreciated. We also give thanks for the many ways in which they enrich the lives of all for whom they so lovingly care. **Mèsi, mèsi tout moun!**

## PARISH FEASTS CELEBRATED

On February eleventh Frs. Gerry, Tony Gruber and Greg Brozonowicz visited the parish of Bèl Fontenn to celebrate with them the feast of Our Lady of

Lourdes. Although the route is

long and difficult, the views are breathtaking, the climb invigorating and the venture well worth the time spent getting there. The people of

Bèl Fontenn, though poor in possessions, are rich in faith, as are the majority of our Haitian sisters and brothers. The feast was a wonder to behold and to participate in, with lively music, graceful dance, powerful preaching and dynamic witness by members of the community.

On the same day, Noreen Gibson, a volunteer at Norwich Mission House and member of our Board of Directors, visited the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Cite Militaire to celebrate the same patronal feast with members of that parish. Noreen's home parish of St. Mark's in Westbrook, CT is twinned with the parish of Cite Militaire. By all accounts, the celebration in Cite Militaire was as uplifting and life giving as that in Bèl Fontenn. The gift of presence and the sharing of faith are what unite us most and strengthen us all.

## “SOUPER” GIFT RECEIVED

The Youth Leadership Council of Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Milwaukee raised \$1,000.00 for Norwich

Mission House on Super Bowl Sunday. As parishioners were leaving the church after Mass, members of the Youth Council stood at the doors with soup bowls in their hands. Attached was a sign asking simply that people help to make this a

"Souper" Sunday, and the money they raised has come to us in response to the twinning relationship that Our Lady of Lourdes shares with Norwich Mission House. **What a thoughtful and creative way to care for others!**

## GIFTS/GRANTS RECEIVED AND APPRECIATED

**D**uring the past few months many precious gifts have been received for use at various projects and parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. *La Maison L'Arc-en-Ciel* was the recipient of some much-needed Aids medicine, ATZ/Retrovier, for some of their children, as well as a copy of Quickbooks to update their finance program. In addition to these gifts, Arc-en-Ciel also received a \$3,000.00 grant from the Cradle Fund of the Diocese of Norwich, a \$5,000.00 grant from the Haitian Ministries Board of Directors, as well as several other donations. These gifts will help to offset the reduction in grants that Arc-en-Ciel presently is experiencing. **We are thankful to everyone who made these grants possible.**

*The Association of Chicago Priests* also awarded again this year a grant of \$1,500.00 to help support the feeding programs that are sponsored through the Office of Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich. **We are very grateful for their continued support** and are happy to report that both the feeding program at *Madam Sonson's* and the

program at the school in *Mirogwan* are continuing very well and providing much needed nourishment for the children whom they serve. **We remain grateful to all who prepare these meals each day, so as to assure proper nourishment for the children entrusted to their care.**

*Sacred Heart Parish, Vialyè* was the recipient of a \$23,000 gift from Elizabeth Ann Seton parish in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. A delegation from Rocky Hill visited Vialyè in March and donated the funds to complete the parish school before the transfer of the present pastor, Father Ladouceur. Fr. Ladouceur will be leaving Vialyè to begin studies in Paris in the fall to obtain a degree in education and administration. We wish him well in his studies and will await his return to Port-au-Prince.

Two other parishes in Haiti also received funds this winter to help with the construction and/or renovation of their schools. *St. Pierre in Gran Bwa* received \$3,484.00 from their twinned parish of Sacred Heart in Groton, Connecticut and *St. Therese parish in Lillavois* received \$6,000 from St. Patrick's in Collinsville, Connecticut. **These gifts are especially appreciated, since, as Maiz often reminds us, "with an education, a person is never poor."**

## TWINNED PARISH VISITED, RELATONSHIP GROWS

**F**ather Gerry visited Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Milwaukee over St.

Patrick's Day weekend to meet with members of the parish who traveled to Haiti during this past year, to speak with the parish at large, and to participate in the annual Missionary Cooperative Appeal for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. While in Milwaukee, Fr. Gerry also was invited to meet and have lunch with Archbishop Weakland, during which the work of Norwich Mission House and the support of Our Lady of Lourdes were discussed.

Jean Baptiste, whom many of you know from your visits to Norwich Mission House, also was invited to accompany Fr. Gerry to Milwaukee and to speak at all of the weekend Masses. Unfortunately, the United States government refused to grant Jean Baptiste a visa to travel with Fr. Gerry. When questioned as to why his visa application was denied, an official at the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince responded, "If we grant him a visa, why would he be stupid enough to return to Haiti?" Another example of U.S. arrogance and prejudice against the people of Haiti. We are grateful for the support and encouragement received from several of our Senators and Congresspeople as they attempted to intervene on behalf of Jean Baptiste. We pray that the policy of our government will change and that Jean Baptiste will be able to enter our country next year.

## LILLAVOIS PASTOR VISITS CONNECTICUT

Father Horelle Fleuriscat, pastor of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus parish in Lillavois, celebrated St. Patrick's Day with members of

his sister parish of St. Patrick in Collinsville, Connecticut. The invitation came when members of St. Patrick's were in Lillavois for the Feast of St. Therese in October 2000.

Pictures of Fr. Horelle's visit can be found by visiting St. Patrick's parish website at <http://ntplx.net/~stpat> Needless to say, a wonderful visit was had by all.

## SHIPPING WOES CONTINUE

While we remain grateful to the many parishes and organizations who continue to collect items for shipment to Haiti, we also remain frustrated with the difficulty we have in shipping these donations to Norwich Mission House. The money spent on shipping and customs fees often exceed the price of the donated goods. Fr. Gerry and Alesandre are continuing with their attempts to obtain a franchise for Norwich Mission House, at which time we also could have a way to ship things free of charge. Until that time, we are unable to accept material for shipment to Haiti, but will send things with our groups as space allows. **Thank you very much for your understanding.**

## HAITIANS REJOICE ON INAUGURATION DAY

Despite reports to the contrary in many U.S. news reports, the people of Haiti rejoiced as Jean Bertrand Aristide once

again assumed the office of President of the Republic of Haiti. Fr. Gerry and visiting priests were in attendance at the Cathedral of Notre Dame for the celebration of the Mass of Thanksgiving that day.

Thousands of people lined the streets surrounding the cathedral awaiting the arrival of their friend and president. Neighborhoods and alleyways across the country were cleaned and painted to celebrate this great occasion in the life of the country. A sign of hope has been restored, and for that the people are grateful. They danced through the night and into the next day in the streets of Port-au-Prince. The occasion was commonly called "Titid's Disco". May the reason for celebration continue in the difficult days and weeks ahead, as Aristide attempts to bring about some of the changes the country so desperately needs.

## DIOCESAN MISSION COOP SCHEDULE

Again this year, Fr. Gerry has been assigned to visit several parishes throughout the Diocese of Norwich to speak on behalf of the work of Norwich Mission House. This annual Missionary Cooperative Appeal,

sponsored by the Office of the

Propagation of the Faith, is taken up in all parishes throughout the United States. Fr. Gerry's schedule this spring/summer is as follows:

**May 19-20, St. Thomas, Voluntown**

**July 14-15, St. Patrick, Mystic**

**July 21-22, St. Lawrence, Killingworth**

**July 28-29, St. Pius X, Middletown**

**August 11-12, St. Joseph, New London**

A Mission Appeal also will be held at **St. Joseph in Occum November 24-25. We**

**appreciate the support of all who contribute to this annual appeal.**

**If you, your parish, business, or organization would like to sponsor the next issue of the Haitian Times, please contact the Office of Haitian Ministries**

## NMH FOUNDING VISION

**We of the Haitian Ministries Office for the Diocese of Norwich join with other members of the body of Christ in joyful response to the Lord's words "Love one another as I have loved you." In responding to this Gospel mandate, we choose to walk in solidarity with the Haitian people, recognizing them as family, promoting their dignity and encouraging their self-determination.**

*Therefore, through our presence, collaboration, education for justice in Haiti and the U.S., and channeling of resources and talents, we commit ourselves to enable the Haitian people to realize their full human potential.*

*Joining hands and hearts with the original diocesan groups who journeyed to Haiti and whose dream was to work with the Haitian people, we continue to collaborate in building a new Haiti, born of suffering, courage, hope, love, compassion and justice – a new Haiti standing as a dignified member of the global community.*

## A FINAL NOTE

**A**s winter gives way to spring and spring quickly will turn into summer, we are ever mindful of the changes that occur in each of our lives and of the many people who help bring about these changes and help us to notice them. We give thanks in our lives for people like Joanne Whitehouse, who help us to see the presence of God in the midst of all that we are and all that we do.

We also are grateful to Noreen Gibson, who spends several months a year helping us at Norwich Mission House, and once again is returning home to spend time with her family and friends. We thank all of our visitors for their presence among us and their concern for the people of Haiti. We give

Thanks for all who hold us in prayer and those who

contribute in many and varied ways to the work of Norwich Mission House.

Life in Haiti continues to be difficult, and the struggle for a better life remains an uphill battle each day. The reaction of the international community

to the inauguration of President Jean Bertrand Aristide remains less than enthusiastic, and at times almost hostile. If only the world would give he and Haiti a chance, great things could be possible. Instead, countries like ours choose to support the Convergence government, thus making life more desperate for thousands of Haitian people. Perhaps the changing of the seasons will bring a change of heart among government leaders and politicians the world over. Perhaps as we move more deeply into the new millenium our policy toward the people of Haiti will change, and we will welcome them into our country with open arms and hearts. That day obviously has not yet arrived, but we are an Easter people and hope springs eternal. May the God of Easter, the one who is our hope and our life, continue to bless us and all whom we serve as we celebrate the fullness of life our God has promised. May the Spirit of Pentecost continue to strengthen us in all that we do.

*God's Peace,*

*Fr. Gerry*

**Don't forget to visit our website at [www.haitianministries.org](http://www.haitianministries.org)**

