



THE HAITIAN TIMES

TIERNEY-TOBIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Education Is The Hope And Goal Of The Improvised And Oppressed

By Amber Walsh

Director, Norwich Mission House

Poverty can be measured in many ways. In Haiti, the poorest country in our hemisphere, deprivation abounds. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the lack of public education for the country's children.

Only 60 percent of Haitians ever have the chance to attend school. The deprivation for so many children is solely a problem of economics. There is very little government-funded education, and only 20 percent of the children who go to school can attend government institutions. Everyone else must pay, and most parents simply cannot afford the tuitions and other costs for private schools.

Haitians truly understand the value of education, and they realize that education is the only way out of the misery overwhelming their homeland. Haitian children know that going to school is a privilege, and those lucky enough to attend are so proud to wear their uniforms and have their supplies.

Most families make tremendous sacrifices to send their children to school. They go without meals, work dusk to dawn in the marketplaces, and live in cramped, unsanitary quarters so they can save money. Even with those sacrifices, they often do not have enough to pay for the 14 years of schooling necessary for a student



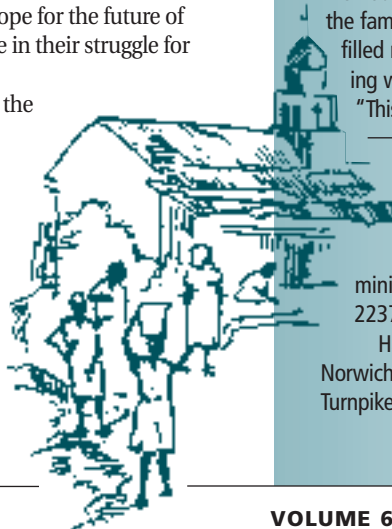
Three girls in school uniforms.

to complete his or her basic education. Only 5 percent of the children who start school will finish.

At Haitian Ministries, we know that sponsoring a child's education is an investment with tremendous returns. Education provides hope for the future of Haiti as it empowers its people in their struggle for self-determination.

Haitian Ministries, through the generous support of donors, is currently sending more than 120 children to school through the Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship Program, which was created in 1997. The program operates with the commitment that, if students continue to work hard and perform well,

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Jeff Joassient

Jeff is 8 and has been to school for only one year.

His mother, Marlène Jean-Charles, is raising 4 children on her own and cannot afford to send them to school. Since her husband died 6 years ago, she can barely afford to feed them.

Their home is in the slums near the mission house. It is

a single room with a double bed, and Marlène lives there with her children, her elderly mother and her brother – 7 in all.

At the entrance to their room, she hangs onions and garlic on display for sale.

"I do what I can to make a little income," she said.

The house where they have their single-room home is dark and made entirely of cement. Everyone takes turns sleeping on the bed, while the others are on the floor. The house has no water or plumbing, and the family depends on a nearby garbage-filled ravine for their bathing and drinking water.

"This is not a way to live," Marlène said.

For more information on the scholarship program, or to become a donor, please contact Emily Smack, at Emily@haitianministries.org, or call her at 860-848-2237 ext. 206, or write to her at:

Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich, 1595 Norwich-New London Turnpike, Uncasville, CT 06382



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Office of Haitian Ministries
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Bishop Flanagan Ministry Center
1595 Norwich-New London Turnpike
Uncasville, CT 06382-1319

(860) 848-2237 ext. 206
haiti.ministry@snet.net
www.haitianministries.org

Bishop Michael R. Cote
Bishop, Diocese of Norwich

Rev. Gerald S. Kirby
Editor;
Bishop's Personal Representative
Diocesan Mission to Port-au-Prince

Amber L. Walsh
Director,
Norwich Mission House

Emily M. Smack
Executive Director,
Office of Haitian Ministries

Peter Harding
Chairman, Executive Board
Office of Haitian Ministries

WE'RE JUST A CLICK AWAY

We've upgraded our website so you can learn more about the work of the Haitian Ministries and how your support is helping Haitians. You can also make online donations to the ministry.

Please visit us at www.haitianministries.org.

Also, the Haitian Ministries has new email addresses. They are: Emily Smack, executive director at Emily@haitianministries.org; Amber Walsh, director of Norwich Mission House, at Amber@haitianministries.org; Fr. Gerry Kirby, bishop's special representative to Haiti, at gskirby@snet.net; Noreen Gibson, travellers' liaison, at Noreen@haitianministries.org; Peter Harding, chair of executive board, at Peter@haitianministries.org.

A Night To Honor Fr. Gerry Kirby

Father Gerry Kirby was the guest of honor at a special dinner in July in Westbrook, CT, to recognize his years of service as the bishop's representative to Haiti from the Diocese of Norwich.

More than 100 people, including his family and many who have known Fr. Gerry both in Haiti and during his earlier years in the priesthood, attended the event. Bishop Michael Cote, the head of the Norwich Diocese, and retired Bishop Daniel Hart also came in tribute.

Fr. Gerry, who is 46, has been in Port-au-Prince at the diocese's Norwich Mission House since 1995. For almost a decade, he made the connections that have brought together various humanitarian programs in Haiti and the diocese's Office of Haitian Ministries. From the mission house, he helped to guide and manage the ministry's support to those programs, which include orphanages, health clinics, meals, school tuitions, marketing of artisans, and small business loans.

His fluency in Creole – a language he mastered early on in Haiti – his caring and love for the Haitian people, and his unwavering belief in the ministry's goal of "helping Haitians help Haitians" have empowered his work and have reaped vast rewards in the countless unions between Haitians and Americans. Along with the Haitians who work at the mission house and American volunteers, he made the house a welcoming and safe retreat center for new and return visitors to Haiti, Haitian priests, and the many friends and associates with agencies in Port-au-Prince and throughout the country.

As the Haitian Ministries continues to grow since its founding in 1985, Fr. Gerry is now focusing on parish twinning and his work with the priests of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. He began the twinning program in 1996 as a way to bond communities in Haiti with those in the United States. The twinings, though not financial contracts, are commitments of deep caring. People from the twinned parishes visit one another annually and give support in ways both tangible and intangible. Today, there are 12 twinned parishes, with many others offering various kinds of support. Fr. Gerry hopes to find more American communities to unite with the dozens of parishes in Port-au-Prince hoping to form partnerships.

At July's recognition dinner, Peter Harding, the new chairperson of the Haitian Ministries board of directors, said, "Father Gerry teaches us what Jesus taught – that everyone is the same ... no



Fr. Gerry and his nephew Adam Yeager at the July dinner.

matter what color we are, no matter what we have. We're all members of the human family, and Father Gerry is a person who brings that to light.

"His collaborations with priests in Port-au-Prince are amazing. Norwich Mission House has become the home, the place for priests to come together."

Fr. Tony Gruber, a priest of the Norwich Diocese, was one of several priests who spoke in tribute. He described how both he and Fr. Gerry have been "blessed enough to get bitten by the Haiti bug."

"That virus takes different forms," he said.

"For Gerry it's a ministry. ... He had a knack for picking up the language. And he's been a witness in Haiti in many ways he doesn't even realize."

Fr. Gerry's assignment to Haiti began with an appointment by Bishop Daniel Reilly, when he led the Norwich Diocese. That assignment was renewed by Bishops Hart and Cote. He first visited the country 11 years earlier, in 1984. At that time, he was a student at Christ the King Seminary in New York but close to ordination and was travelling in a group with the Rev. James Carini. Fr. Carini, a longtime friend who also spoke at the July dinner, has known Fr. Gerry since he was a student at St. Bernard High School in Uncasville and Fr. Carini was chaplain there.

Before moving to Port-au-Prince in 1995, Fr. Gerry served in various parishes in the Norwich Diocese, including Durham, Preston, Rockville, Middletown and Moosup. He is a native of Norwich, where his parents and several of his four siblings still live. His mother, Evelyn Kirby, has served on the ministry's executive board and remains a member of one of its committees.

Fr. Carini, in his tribute, said of Fr. Gerry and his work: "Parishes that reach beyond their boundaries ... really are a catholic church. ... Gerry is truly a Catholic priest. And we thank Gerry for opening new opportunities for experience.

"We thank him for making all of us catholic, because of his ministry."

New Members Of Executive Board

The Haitian Ministries elected a new board of directors this summer. The members are as follows: Peter Harding, chair; Barbara Wysocki, vice chair; Terry Cahill, treasurer; Kyn Tolson, secretary.

The following is an open letter from Peter Harding:

Dear Friends,

I write today as the newly elected chairperson of the Haitian Ministries Board of Directors. I live in Rocky Hill with my wife, Eileen, and have two children and four grandchildren. I am employed full time as the Executive Director of St. Vincent DePaul Place in Middletown.

In March of 2002, I visited Haiti for the first time with a group from my home parish of St. Elizabeth Seton in Rocky Hill. It was truly a life-altering experience for me, and for most of the people that I traveled with. Many from that group are very active in our ministry today. Barbara Wysocki, of Rocky Hill, is our new vice chair and serves on several of our board committees.

Our sincere thanks go out to our past chairperson, Greg Secord, for his many years of dedication and service to the people of Haiti. Greg remains on our board and chairs the Fund Development Committee. It was through his leadership that Haitian Ministries was able to purchase our new home in Haiti about a year ago.

Haitian Ministries thrives today only because of the continued commitment and support of Bishop Michael Cote and the Diocese of Norwich. The bishop's representative, Fr. Gerry Kirby, has been in Haiti for years. His concern for, and appreciation of the Haitian people have inspired many to serve God's people throughout the world.

I leave you with my commitment to serve the people of Haiti through this ministry, and to ask that you continue to pray for our Haitian sisters and brothers.

Sincerely,
Peter A. Harding

Scholarships

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they will be funded through secondary school. These are children who otherwise would not be able to afford school.

We provide:

• **Tuition:** We give full tuitions, which cover enrollment and monthly payments.

• **Books:** We loan the necessary books to students for all of their classes. At the end of the year, they return the books to be used by others in subsequent years.

• **Student/Parent Administrative Support:** We follow the students carefully to make sure that they keep up with their courses and meet our grade requirements. We ask that students keep above-average grades, and we terminate scholarships for those who cannot maintain these standards. We also meet regularly with parents to encourage them to support their children's studies.

It costs less than \$30 a month to educate a student. The annual costs are \$275 for a child in primary school and \$350 for a student in secondary school.

We encourage sponsors to make long-term commitments, because the Haitian education system spans 14 years of studies for children from age 5 to 19. With a commitment of continued support, each donor is sent information on the child, as well as annual updates. Also, the donor can choose to contact the student.

We realize, however, that not all donors can sign on for long terms. But they can donate directly to the scholarship program for any amount, and that money is used to purchase books and school supplies.

For exceptional students who could never afford to go to college, we also have post-secondary sponsorships. Through this program, students attend medical, nursing, business, and vocational schools. After graduation, they are better able to help themselves and their families while filling an important need for professionals in Haiti.

Today, as the economy of Haiti worsens and its people become even more desperate, parents have fewer means of supporting their families. Families who are cramped into small, rented rooms struggle just to put food on the table and cannot even consider schooling for their children.

Through the Tierney-Tobin scholarships, the Haitian Ministries hopes to help break the miserable cycle of poverty.

We have dozens of people on the waiting lists for education, at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

Two of those on the waiting list are:

Samuel Bladimir Cadet

Samuel is 6 years old and the oldest of 3 children living with their parents, Mignonne and Bladimir, in an abandoned building on Rue Charlemagne Peralte, the same street as Norwich Mission House.

His mother sells whatever she can find on the streets whenever she is able. Her husband works as a painter when he can pick up odd jobs.

Mignonne has come to the mission house several times to ask for help to send Samuel to school. She does not want to see him "sit at home another year."

At this point the family is surviving hand to mouth.



Samuel Bladimir Cadet

Leane Augustin

Augustin is 14 years old and hopes to enter secondary school. She has fallen behind in her studies, because for the last two years her parents could not afford her schooling.

She lives in a rented room with both her parents and her 4 siblings on Delmas 60, near the Haitian Ministries' former mission house. Her mother makes what she can by grilling and selling coffee. Her father sells cold water out of a bucket to market women and taxi drivers in the street.

Amazingly enough, with so little income (less than a dollar a day), Elene and Charles Augustin have managed to provide all their children with some education. Leane held very high marks in her last year of school. Unfortunately, as times have gotten tougher, she has had to stay home.



Leane Augustin

Our Condolences

On August 30, the wife of Frantz Borno, Salia, died at the age of 28. Frantz has been an employee at the mission house for several years and has been supporting his wife and two young children, Anihant, 8 years old, and Luktre, 4.

The mission house and all its friends and supporters grieve for Frantz and his family. Please keep them in your prayers.

Students Helping Students

The mission house and all of Haitian Ministries extends its gratitude to the Faith Formation students in the seventh and eighth grades at St. Francis of Assisi in Middletown for their donation to the scholarship fund.

Students gave \$297.90 to the Tierney-Tobin Memorial Scholarship Fund Program. They raised the money in a bottle-and-can collection drive.

A Goal Is Reached

The Haitian Ministries reached its goal of \$75,000 as a donation toward the reconstruction of the orphanage of Foyer d'Accueil.

This orphanage is in the City of God neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, a particularly dismal and impoverished place, and the 60 girls who live there now would otherwise likely be on the streets.

Brother St. Vistal, who founded and runs the orphanage, sends his deep appreciation to all supporters. A special thanks goes to Cross International, our partners in this endeavor, which matched each donation, dollar for dollar.

Trips To Haiti

The Haitian Ministries invites groups of all kinds to seek information about trips to Haiti.

The ministry leads and oversees various immersion and retreat trips to Port-au-Prince, where travelers stay at the mission house and learn about the work being done there and the Haitian people.

Groups to the mission house come from schools, universities, medical communities and various churches and parishes.

Currently, the following dates in 2005 are available for booking: May 2 – 11; May 16 – 25; and July 18 – 27.

Other dates throughout the year are possible.

To learn more about the immersion/retreat trips, or to reserve a date, please contact Emily Smack at emily@haitianministries.org or call 860-848-2237 ext. 206.



Condolences

On August 23, Fr. Gardy Malbranche, pastor of the parish of St. Pierre in Ganthier, was assassinated near his family home in Martissant.

His parish has been twinned with St. Matthew in Tolland, CT, since 1998, and he had spent a weekend in mid-June visiting St. Matthew. At that time, he thanked the people for their continuing support.

"My parish was like a child," he said. "It could not walk alone. It needed help very much, like Jesus needed it for his work. ... As long as we live, we always need people. St. Matthew has come to push Ganthier to grow up. ... Your love and faith took care of us."

The funeral for Fr. Malbranche, who was 53, was celebrated at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Port-au-Prince on Aug. 5.

We are very grateful to Fr. Jim Carini, pastor of St. Matthew, and parishioner John Bouley for attending and also to Fr. Frank Rouleau who traveled to Haiti to con-celebrate the funeral of our brother and friend.

We offer our sincere sympathy to the family of Fr. Malbranche. May he rest in peace.

We offer our heart-felt sympathy to Fr. Jan Hansons and his family at the death of their mother, Maria. Fr. Hansons, director of the Justice and Peace Commission for the Haitian Episcopal Conference, is a long-time friend of Norwich Mission House and continues to share his insights and wisdom with guests during their stays with us. May Maria, too, rest in peace.

Many Visits

Throughout the spring, summer and fall, Fr. Gerry visited parishes both in Haiti and the United States.

He celebrated Palm Sunday with the mountain community of Zoranje, which recently twinned with St. Patrick-St. Anthony of Hartford. On Easter Sunday, he celebrated Mass with the people of St. Jude, Mon Opital. Also in April, he visited the parish of Cite Militaire, with a group from their twin parish of St. Mark, Westbrook.

In May, Fr. Gerry joined the members of the Missionhurst community in celebrating their 50th anniversary in Haiti. The outdoors event was a fitting tribute to their years of service among the people of Haiti. We have been blessed over the years to have Missionhurst priests share their experience of Haiti with delegations during their visits with us.

Fr. Gerry traveled to the island of La Gonav in May for the parish feast of Anse Galet, as well as to visit the other two parishes on the island. The newest parish, St. Augustine, is perhaps the poorest and neediest parish in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince and would like to twin with a parish in the United States.

Fr. Gerry visited two twinned parishes in Milwaukee during the spring. His first visit took him to Our Lady of Lourdes, which is twinned with Norwich Mission House.

After returning to Haiti, he visited St. Jude to celebrate the First Communion Mass with the children of the parish. Soon after, he traveled with Fr. Delisca Bichara, pastor of St. Jude, to visit his twin parish of Gesu, on the campus of Marquette University.

Both visits were extremely rewarding as old relationships were strengthened and new ones formed.

In June, Fr. Gerry traveled to Connecticut with Fr. Gardy Malbranche, pastor of St. Pierre in Ganthier, visiting his twin parish of St. Matthew in Tolland.

During this trip, Fr. Gerry launched the Annual Misson COOP appeals throughout the diocese. He returned to Haiti to join in the celebration of the parish feast of Saintaard, and soon traveled back to Connecticut with the Fr. Arsene Jasmin to visit his twin parish, St. Elizabeth Seton in Rocky Hill.

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"Agronomist" Shown As Campaign Fundraiser

As the fundraiser for the capital campaign for the new Norwich Mission House, executive board presented a special viewing of the movie "Agronomist" in late September at the Madison Art Cinemas in Madison, CT.

The Jonathan Demme film is a documentary of Jean Dominique, a human rights activist and well known Haitian radio commentator who was assassinated in Port-au-Prince in April 2000.

The board extends a special thanks to Madison resident Vitty O'Toole, whose generosity and that of other donors, made the event a success.

The aim of the capital campaign is to raise \$300,000 for the cost and renovations of the new mission house in Port-au-Prince, which the ministry has had for more than a year now. The campaign has brought in \$140,000, and the board continues to seek support.

For more information about the campaign, or to donate, please contact, Emily Smack, at emily@haitianministries.org or call 860-848-2237 ext. 206

Visits In Haiti

continued

On Aug. 6, Fr. Gerry joined Archbishop Miot and other priests in celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hospital San Fils. Fr. Gerry visits the hospital regularly, and this silver anniversary celebration was a fine tribute to the work of the Missionaries of Charity in Haiti.

During a visit by parishioners from Our Lady of Lourdes, Milwaukee, the group joined Fr. Gerry at the celebration of the patronal feast of the cathedral parish of Port-au-Prince on the Feast of the Assumption. During this same trip, the Milwaukee group visited the newly founded parish of Darbonne.



A Final Note

These past months have been filled both with joy and with sadness.

I offer my sincere thanks to the members of the Board of Directors for the Office of Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich for the tribute they offered me at their annual recognition dinner this summer.

I also am very grateful to everyone who attended the dinner as well as to those of you who sent notes and cards to me. I thank all of you for the wonderful digital camera and printer given me that evening. Your thoughtfulness and generosity are greatly appreciated. (I was disappointed, however, that the horse and motorcycle were nowhere to be found when I returned to Port-au-Prince!)

I was pleased to accompany Sr. Ellen Flynn on her return to Connecticut, while at the same time I was saddened to learn of her resignation as director of Hospice St. Joseph in Port-au-Prince. Due to health problems, Sr. Ellen has returned to Hartford for medical treatment.

I join the members of our diocese as well as all who have been associated with Hospice St. Joseph in thanking Sr. Ellen for her years of service both as director of Norwich Mission House and director of Hospice St. Joseph. Please join me in prayers for her continued health.

I was deeply saddened at the recent death of Fr. Malbranche, a friend to me and to so many of you. Although the people of Haiti continue to live in the midst of violence and uncertainty, they also remain people of hope and deep faith. While no sense can be found in violence of any sort, as members of the Body of Christ we, along with our Haitian sisters and brothers, stand against such actions wherever they occur.

We continue to pray that peace will prevail in this land and everywhere throughout the world. We hope that security in Haiti grows and that the transition to a new democratic government will be both peaceful and beneficial for all.

Peace, Fr. Gerry

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Bishop Flanagan Ministry Center
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