

St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish twinned with St. Michel Parish, Saltadere, Haiti



Early elementary class at table

In the 1990's the diocese of Richmond began working with the diocese of Hinche in Haiti to establish one on one relationships between parishes in each diocese. St. Michel Parish in the village of Saltadère, Haiti, is twinned with St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and Holy Comforter Parish in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Representatives of the two parishes have visited Saltadère several times in the last few years, most recently in January 2013. Some of the trips have included medical personnel to

provide much-needed aid to the people of Saltadère. Over the last several years, UVA—CSM students have visited as a group working with the school children. Father Ilric Louis Jeune, pastor of St. Michel, visited our parishes in September 2012.

The essence of twinning is to build real friendships between Americans and Haitians. This is just as important, in the long run, as the material aid we can give. Traveling to Haiti – and, when possible, bringing Haitians to visit us – is an essential part of the program. In our parish the oversight for the twinning relationship is carried out by the Haiti Committee (see our weekly report in the bulletin—*The Haitian Station*). Some activities have involved other ministries of our parish, including Respect Life and Christian Formation to provide Safe Birth Kits and Student Health Kits to Saltadère. Additionally, the school children of Lekol St. Michel have benefited from an Eagle Scout project that gathered and donated clothing for the children.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead and we always welcome new members to this Ministry!

Time Commitment:
Committee meetings
1 ½ hours per month

Trips to Haiti (optional)
7-10 days

Our school garden irrigation project will bring better food for lunchtime





Secondary students, with teachers, show artwork for notecards

St. Michel's parish school has a new school building, dedicated in February 2007, which houses thirteen classrooms and is constructed entirely of durable cement-block. In 2011 construction was completed on a three room classroom building especially for the preschool classes. The total cost of the school construction has exceeded \$190,000.

The school now enrolls over 700 students due to refugees from Port-au-Prince and to the many displaced children brought to Saltadere by St. Michel's new pastor. An increased number of students puts a strain on

scarce resources for nutrition, hygiene and sanitation. Additional classroom space is needed. There is an acute need for housing for the over 100 displaced children who now live at St. Michel rectory. Our parish hopes to provide assistance.

As well, the school garden is about to benefit from a project to provide irrigation from the nearby river. The twinning parishes have received a grant from the diocese to help fund the pump and piping for the irrigation and, as well, the agronomist to educate the school and the community. Fund raising has begun on a clean water project for the community.

Parishioners can support St. Michel School by sponsoring a student. See Haiti Table for info.



Rectory at St. Michel

For more information:

<http://www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti/>

General information about all the "twinning programs"

<http://www.stauva.org/>

Click on Parish Life, then click Haiti, to view the committee's web page.

<http://www.saltadere.org> to learn about our activities in Saltadere and to view recent pictures

Or contact sponsorshipprogram@gmail.com for information on sponsoring a child

Contact the committee at anne@stagebridge.net

Thanks for your interest!