

Twenty-four hours in Saltadere, Haiti



6:30 am the sun is just rising as parishioners of St. Michel, Saltadere, Haiti, make their way to Mass. The church bell woke them up and called them to mass. The church is occupied by a few elderly ladies seated on the front benches. The altar cloth has typical Haitian designs embroidered. A statue of the Virgin Mary looks down on these ladies saying the rosary



The new pastor of St. Michel, Father Ilric Louis Jeune, comes to the altar and mass begins with all the people singing.

Pere Ilric attends to the needs of a parishioner, giving her clothes, donated by a member of our committee, for her new baby



8am At the school, over 660 students in grades preschool to Grade 11 make their way through the village streets. Students carry sticks to donate as fuel for the fire to cook the school lunch.



During our visit the school day included a special activity—the taking of individual photos. With the aid of three young men of Saltadere, Kerby, Jimmy and Ronald, and the translation provided by Djimson Orzil, of nearly 700 students, about 650 were photographed.



The enrollment at the school has grown over the last several years as grade levels have been added and as “refuges” from Port au Prince have returned to the country. Since January of this year there are an additional 50 or so children enrolled as Father Ilric brought from his

last assignment over 80 orphans. All these children, ages 1 to 35, now live at the rectory.



The school garden is growing plantain, coconut, mango and vegetables. The solar panels are working and the irrigation pump is on site ready to install.



9am From the standpoint of health, Nurse Gertrude provides basic care with medicine such as antibiotics and antihypertensives. Saltadere has avoided the ravages of cholera due to education and care for having clean water. Father Ilric reported that over 2000 parishioners died of cholera at his former parish.

On this recent visit, over 90 patients were seen in clinic with Gertrude. At the clinic, expert medical translation was provided by Gladias Sainvil. When necessary, urgent referrals are made to St. Joseph Clinic in Thomassique or to Cerca la Source. Midwives for Haiti are visiting monthly from the state capital of Hinche.

World Vision provides nutritional support to the population, particularly mothers and infants.



Noon A school lunch is provided. In each classroom, clean water is provided by using a bucket/chlorine system.



Due to the expanded enrollment, the school kitchen requires more space.

At the Rectory Compound we are treated to an excellent meal by the staff



3pm We have a successful meeting with the Water Committee for Saltadere. Father Ilric holds the meeting in the Clinic space and we learn about the needs of the town which focuses on improving the present water distribution system.



Later, we drive to the water source for the town and talk about how the committee feels it could be improved.



We stop at each public water distribution point for the committee to point out connections and problems.



Because the people living along the road have seen the water committee pass by, concern is raised that supply to their point (tap) is about to be cut off and as we make the return trip, 50-70 people, each with at least two containers, are standing around the tap waiting to fill up. Father Ilric stops and reassures them that there is no intent to cut off the water and the trip continues.

8pm Back at the Rectory, after supper, Father Ilric explained his needs and

wishes for the future. New at St. Michel Saltadere are the eighty plus orphans who are all staying at the rectory. These children were with Father Ilric at his former assignment and Bishop St. Hillien instructed him to bring them along to Saltadere. About 50-60 are attending St. Michel school. A highlight of the day: if we were on the porch at the rectory when school was out, each returning child greeted us with a kiss (to the lady from boys and girls) and a handshake (from boys to men). Although many in Saltadere are benefitting from the education provided at St. Michel—the majority at no cost to the family—there are many families whose children cannot attend the school because of space and cost.

Bishop St. Hillien has asked our new pastor to take on a new chapel in a neighboring village of Ti Wazo. At present, they have no worship structure. This village also needs help with school and water.

The bishop has also recommended to Father Ilric that he build an orphanage. Along with the orphanage, Father Ilric would like to have a farm of some acres to provide food for this new population.



Plans are continuing to construct a new school building at Lagua, one of the chapels for which Father Ilric is responsible—the other (third) chapel is at Los Cacaos.

10pm Reflections--As the twinning parishes for St. Michel—Holy Comforter and St. Thomas Aquinas continue on the journey with our Haitian

brothers and sisters in Christ. We keep in mind that the needs are great. We pray that God will bless our efforts to provided sustainable solutions to improve education, health and water for Saltadere and that by so doing, inhabitants of Saltadere will be employed in providing these solutions.

6 AM the next day
we leave Haiti refreshed and enlightened



Anne and Mike Knasel
Report of trip January 20-27, 2012

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