

Haiti Visit to Evaluate the Situation on the Ground & Facilitate Twinning

On Monday, October 21st, I, PTPA's Executive Director, traveled from Fort Lauderdale to Cap Haitian, Haiti. Together with my traveling companions, Mr. Gilbert "Chip" Wirth and Father Tom Streit, CSC, I then traveled the extremely bumpy road to Hinche, in the Central Plateau. We had the great privilege of attending the grand opening of a new entrepreneurial school, which is part of the University of Notre Dame, Hinche. It was a grand celebration, with about 30 priests from the Hinche Diocese who celebrated a mass with other dignitaries, special guests, current Notre Dame students and prospective students, followed by a ribbon cutting and fantastic meal.



This new school of Notre Dame is headed by Father Herald Jean, a priest of the Hinche diocese and the school will begin accepting applications in January of 2025. The course of study will be two years in length and the tuition is \$1,000 per year. If you have a student who you would like to send to the school, you can reach Father Herald at hjean@nd.edu

While in Hinche I was able to meet with Mr. Ernsó Sylvain, who is employed by our friends at Unlocking Communities. Ernsó is a very enterprising young man, who also has a very successful English school. If you have a student in the Central region interested in learning English, you can reach Ernsó at ernso@unlockingcommunities.org



I had the pleasure of meeting Father Jacques Volcius, the director of Caritas for the Hinche diocese. For those of you not familiar with Caritas, it is essentially the Haitian equivalent of our U.S. Catholic Charities. They operate a very robust and successful microcredit program in many parishes throughout the diocese. All ten dioceses of Haiti have a Caritas and director and many also manage microcredit programs. If you've ever wanted to start a microcredit program at your parish, often Caritas is able to function as the local manager. Caritas Hinche also purchases iodized salt from a plant in Port au Prince, started by Father Tom for about 90 parish schools. Father Tom educated me on the extremely important connection between iodine and early brain development. Most Haitians grow up deficient in iodine, inhibiting their ability to learn.



On Wednesday, October 21st we returned to Cap where I stayed until my return on Monday, the 28th. One of the highlights of my time in Cap was the opportunity to meet Dr. Moussanto Dantil, the veterinarian who will be my guest on our November 26th Zoom Gathering. He is a fascinating and brilliant man who is interested in expanding his model of training vet technicians beyond the central region to other parts of Haiti. He taught me more about chickens than I thought I'd ever know!

Moussanto came to visit me at St. Mary Who Unties Knots parish in Bois de Lance, just outside of Limonade. He was able to inspect the new chicken house started by Father Max as both a social enterprise and a source of food for his school children. Father Max is starting out with 200 chickens, on his way to raising 1,400 at a time.



I am constantly amazed at some of the things that I witness while in Haiti. While I was waiting for our truck to be pulled out of a huge mud puddle, I saw a new record for me – 8 humans on a single motorcycle!



I am happy to report that during our many hours of travel in the north and central regions, we did not experience even a hint of insecurity! The violence that makes the news continues to be concentrated in and around Port-au-Prince. Nearly every conversation I had included lamenting about the circumstances in PAP that continue to make life difficult throughout the country – primarily due to inflation and the sparse availability of many items for purchase.

If you/your parish is considering traveling to Haiti, feel free to reach out to me and I am happy to talk to you about ways to stay safe.
God bless!