

EDITORIAL

La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, ms

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Dear Co-missioners,

By the time you receive this newsletter we have already celebrated the July 4th weekend, Independence Day. My mind wanders around my experience on Memorial Day back in May. I was invited by Paul Jussen, a seminarian of La Salette, to visit Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis which is down the road from where we live. I was touched and deeply moved seeing the many thousands of tombstones that are spread through acres and acres of land. It took us about an hour to drive around it. I said freedom didn't come easy. We have tasted war, violence, fear and danger. Thousands gave their lives to protect our nation. They are our heroes. I feel so proud to belong to a great nation and I feel deeply grateful for the many blessings.

Many people around the world still live in danger of war and violence. Let us pray for the many men and women in uniform who put their lives in harm's way. Some of our missionaries often live in dangerous situations and they continue to live each day in hope. Let us pray for peaceful co-existence of all nations on earth as one growing human family.



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Fr. Joseph Gosselin, MS, retired after serving as pastor at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish in Sulphur, Louisiana. Currently he resides at the Blessed Trinity Rectory in Orlando, Florida. His love for the missions has taken him to Haiti at least twice in the past year. He shares his experiences and stories of Haiti through his journals, which I found very interesting and inspiring.

JOURNAL #1

I arrived in Haiti a week ago Tuesday the 10th in January of 2012. As expected my reception, led by the parish priest Fr. Marc-Edy Dessalines of St. Claire's parish in Dessalines was warm and cordial. Much change has taken place in the past eleven months since I first visited. The airport which was dark, run down and chaotic is now rebuilt and very efficient. The million tents or shanties that were here at that time have now been reduced to half a million. Enough food for survival is getting through. But vast problems remain due to an unemployment rate of 70% and so much destruction. And, thank God for little blessings, the internet connections are now mercifully much faster.

Dessalines, where I am staying, is a provincial rural town three hours north of the capital: Port-Au-Prince. There is little pollution. No cars, few trucks, quite a few small motor bikes. The weather at this time is near perfect between 78 and 84 degrees with pleasant breezes. This is the depth of their winters. My stomach has taken to the food which is well prepared but different and does take some getting use to. When I am tempted to complain I think of the majority of the people who at best live on two meals a day.

JOURNAL #2

Two weeks tomorrow since my arrival.....The world experienced through the eyes of present day Haiti seems infinitely different and ages away from the world of North America, yet a few hundred miles away. I remember being so impressed with one of the group who visited Haiti last



February. He hailed from Cape Cod, told us that he liked Boston College High School so much that he spent four hours a day commuting. But today a 22 year old fella told me that as a child from ten to fourteen he walked three hours EACH WAY daily to go to school! Almost daily some person confides that they are just plain hungry. That is why our parish which has six or seven schools in the outlying area, feeds literally thousands of meals each school day. “....infinitely different and ages away.....”).

Now for some bright spots.....One, it's an old cliché but people here love to sing...morning Masses at 6:00 a.m. people sing as much as most North American parishes sing at weekend Masses (even telling the pastor who is a compelling speaker that they prefer singing to a homily!). People sing their happinesses, people sing their sorrows....Last Saturday's funeral in the afternoon seemed straight out of New Orleans: band all dressed in black followed by the funeral car, followed by the congregation (all dressed in black also) walking and singing to the Church and then to the cemetery. Again last Saturday the electricity stopped. Seven hours later the backup solar batteries breathed their last and of course when we needed him most the fella who operated the generator, (back up of back up) was nowhere to be found. Waking up at 5 the next morning there was nothing to do but stay in bed and wait for early morning light. In the light of the above.....I have no complaints.



JOURNAL #3

It feels like an eternity already but less dramatically it has been only four weeks since reaching these shores——landing on the tarmac to be more precise.

One a.m. pastor Fr. Marc-edy awakened by a rat chewing away at his books in upright the sliding glass book shelf.....solution simple.....pastor closes sliding doors completely and traps rat for early morning execution.....rat proceeds to keep him awake doing his ratty dirty deed loudly

.....pastor decides to terminate his existence with extreme prejudice (as they once said in Vietnam). Rat uncooperative. Pastor irritated goes after rat accidentally breaking glass door.....rat eludes capture. Pastor calls in a reinforcement. Now not one but two humans lunge towards rat several times.....eventually captures and sends critter to rat heaven.....after more than an hour and a half chase pastor and helper flush with victory retire exhausted.



On a more serious note: Why do little girls cry?

As I entered Sr. Christine's school office this morning a pretty little five year old girl in a school uniform was carried in screaming from hunger pains. Sister and one assistant laid her down gently on a mat and started to feed her slowly, compassionately. Our Lady of the Cape La Salette Parish, Brewster, MA spends \$4,000 a month feeding these students....for there are many like her who simply suffer silently...Heart searing experience.

Visiting the sick and homebound Haitian style

I don't understand Creole but with the normal complement of five helpers visiting the sick is no big deal.....warm greetings all around.....a decade of the rosaryconfession if asked for.....song.....communion....silent prayer.....song.....small talk....final prayer and blessing with all making sign of cross over person...picture with another family member(s).....small gift and departure.....twenty or thirty minutes usually.....very time inefficient but so deeply and satisfyingly human for all concerned.

St. Anne's Parish from Hagerstown, Md.

St. Anne's also contribute very substantial resources to feeding program. Five of their parishioners were here last week. Motley group: pastor, cancer research scientist, business woman, claims adjuster, educational leader.....working towards helping children learn how to properly wash their hands.....dirty hands being the main conduit of sickness in 3rd world...by demonstrating how to wash hands effectively by ingeniously using only sticks and string, a suspended discarded water bottle, containing clean water, powered by a stick foot pedal and soap suspended from a string.....it's hilarious how this group unconsciously hammed it all up in a skit that riveted kids showing a system that is credited to have saved countless lives worldwide.....



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Should you wish to do so, our legal title is:

North American La Salette Mission Center, Inc.