

## **Jan. 25 -- Collaboration, Contributions, Status of Salesian Sisters**

### **Collaboration**

Hans-Jürgen Dörrich from Jugend Dritte Welt (JDW) in Bonn left New Rochelle on Sunday evening, returning to Bonn on Monday morning, January 25. The staff of Salesian Missions and the province leadership in N.R. are most grateful for his presence and assistance in the first 12 days of dealing with the Haiti emergency.

Salesian Missions (N.R.) has drafted Haiti Emergency Relief Accountability Guidelines and on January 17 circulated them for feedback from other Salesian procurers and NGOs. That feedback is awaited so that the guidelines can be finalized.

Salesian procurers and NGOs are requested to provide their e-mail addresses to Shoestring Group's Hanna Brazee Gregory ([hannah@shoestringgroup.com](mailto:hannah@shoestringgroup.com)) directly for timely transmission of information from the Shoestring Group regarding Haiti.

### **Sisters Ready to Help in Miami's Operation Pierre Pan**

The Salesian Sisters helped exiled Cuban children in the 1960s, and they're ready to work with the archdiocese of Miami to help Haitian children orphaned by the earthquake.

Sr. Phyllis Neves, provincial of FMA Eastern Province, explained that if the Sisters' application is approved, they will be involved in the archdiocese's *Operation Pierre Pan*, an effort coordinated by Catholic Charities and modeled after the 1960s-era program *Operación Pedro Pan*, in which 14,048 Cuban children who arrived to the U.S. without their parents were housed with families in Florida after Cuba's communist revolution. Just like that two-year program, the Haitian children would live in temporary shelters in south Florida until foster homes are found, or they are reunited with family members.

Miami is home to approximately 300,000 Haitian-Americans; they are probably the biggest immigrant community in the city after the Cuban population.

Sr. Phyllis stressed that the project is still in a preliminary stage. The principal of Miami's Immaculata-LaSalle High School, Sr. Pat Roche, FMA, "is in dialog with Catholic Charities and has offered the youth center at LaSalle as a possible site for the children. Personnel in the province have been identified who could coordinate this program and provide the necessary care. At this point, we know nothing specific, as the important step is to identify the children who really are orphaned. If we are accepted, we'd receive a group." She added that Sr. Marie Adline Clergé, former provincial of Haiti, who is currently in the U.S. to study English, and two novices who know Creole, are willing to help in this effort, as well as other sisters and volunteers from the FMAs' VIDES program.

In addition to the community in Miami, Sr. Phyllis added that Mary Help of Christians School in North Haledon, N.J., which once was a boarding school, could re-open its dormitory and create a home environment. She spoke with Sr. Kim Keraitis, principal of the school, who explained they could also offer the middle-school or high school children an education and a safe environment.

"At this time," Sr. Phyllis said, "we are waiting to hear from the diocese."

### **The Salesian Sisters at Jacmel**

Following an aftershock centered on Jacmel, Haiti, on January 18 that measured 6.5 on the Richter scale, it seemed to the Antilles FMAs urgent to go to Jacmel in person. It's impossible to communicate by phone. So Sr. Elizabeth Corsino, animator of the Barahona, D.R., community, visited Jacmel last week.

Sr. Elizabeth writes to the FMAs of the world: "I have just returned from Jacmel, where we have a community of seven sisters, three of whom are temporary professed. Because it was impossible to get there overland – the earthquake has cut the city off by road – I managed to get there by sea."

"On Wednesday afternoon, the 20th," she continues, "I went to Pedernales, the city closest to the port of Cabo Rojo, whence the Dominican Navy's ships were leaving for Jacmel; first I made a contact, hoping to be able to sail on Thursday morning. I stayed with the Mercederian Sisters of Charity, with whom we have a good relationship because of our belonging to the same diocese.

"Thursday was the feast of Our Lady of Altagrazia, a very important feast for the Haitian people. Together with a group of North American doctors, volunteers from diverse NGOs who work in the area, I was able to leave on the 21st at 11:30 a.m. Dominican time. We arrived at Jacmel at 4:00 p.m. Haiti time. Msgr. Jean-Theodule Domond, apostolic administrator, who lives near our sisters and had been in contact with our pastor about the time of my arrival, was at the port to meet me. The sisters were not expecting me, and so you can imagine their surprise when they saw me arrive accompanied by their 'acting bishop'! In addition to greeting all, I brought the sisters Mother Yvonne's letter of January 16 and some photocopied messages and articles that had been published on our web site.

"The FMAs are well. Luckily, the physical structure of the sisters' house, like the school, did not suffer damage, notwithstanding the quakes. That night while I was sleeping there was a strong aftershock that awakened and frightened us all. Even though the house seems to be in good condition, the sisters sleep outside in tents for safety. I had the experience of doing the same, and of experiencing the anguish of that strong movement and the terrifying noise that the shocks produce. A group of doctors from the United States who work in the hospitals during the day as volunteers return to the sisters' courtyard at night to rest. Some families also are with them in the yard during the night.

"They have water, but drinking water must come from Santo Domingo. From the 21st they have had electricity, but the hours of service are minimum. Fuel can still be found in the city. Things are not as contaminated as in Port-au-Prince, nor is the stench as bad. Even though there are many destroyed buildings, some are still standing; but these cannot be used for safety reasons. There are no bodies on the streets, but they are still digging in the rubble, especially under the university, which collapsed, where many students who worked by day were taking to evening/night classes.

"I brought what I thought would be necessary, but by going personally I was able to see exactly what they needed, for example, specific medicines.

"I was able to visit the sisters of other congregations, at the request of the sisters who are close to our own. They were very kind to me and made their needs known so that I could be their spokesman."

Sr. Elizabeth was gone for three days, traveling many hours by ship. Her account concludes: "Our sisters are very grateful to Mother Yvonne and all the sisters of the world. When they read Mother's letter in French, they were moved and happy, and I told myself

that it was worth the trouble of taking that trip. They could not believe that I had come by ship, but they understood that all the FMAs were there with me, close to them. Their joy was indeed great.”

### **More Aid for Port-au-Prince**

300,000 chlorine tablets (“Chlor tablets”) provided by the International Water Aid Organization through JDW were delivered in Port-au-Prince on Sunday, January 24. (Photo of their arrival in S.D. was distributed a day or two ago.) Locally procured medications donated by Salesian parishes in the Dominican Republic were also delivered.

A second convoy of trucks with food and emergency relief items, including rice, beans, water, and dry fish, all procured in the Dominican Republic will leave La Vega bound for Port-au-Prince on Tuesday, January 26, at 2:00 a.m. Their destinations are Carrefour-Thorland and Pétion-Ville. Pictures will be taken at point of departure and at distribution points in Port-au-Prince. Additional trucks of food will be delivered to Port-au-Prince later this week from S.D.

This type of emergency and humanitarian relief effort will continue as necessary until containers from Cross International begin to arrive in Barahona, making more regular and sustained delivery possible.

Sandals Foundation and Sandals Resorts have offered to defray the cost of “school in a box” kits for Salesian students in Haiti; kits will be ordered as soon as the Haitian SDBs advise on number of students that will need them when “normalcy” sets in. Thus far Sandals Foundation has raised \$100,000 in cash for Haiti’s relief program.

BEGECA’s representative in S.D. is in contact with the Emergency Relief Team in S.D. with likely opportunities of enhanced logistics coordination with UN-led Logistics’ Cluster.

Water purification equipment offers arranged by VIS and JDW were accepted, and transportation arrangements are being worked out for delivery to S.D. for ultimate delivery to Port-au-Prince.

The Madrid Procure has donated 300,000 euros to the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Fund.