

## July 6, 2010 - Haiti – Life begins again



**(ANS – Port-au-Prince)** – Almost six months after the earthquake that devastated the country, life in Haiti is taking the first tentative steps. Fr. Ducange Sylvain, superior of the Haitian Vice Province, gives a picture of the situation in a letter sent to the ANS offices.

In what was once the pearl of the Caribbean, the situation is still critical. With the older problems and those caused by the earthquake, progress toward any form of normality is slow and often meets the unexpected. Officially the state of emergency is supposed to be over; some humanitarian organizations and many people have left the country. The shops are re-opening and are filled with customers; the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have begun their pastoral work again.

The Rinaldi Foundation, recognized by the government of Haiti on Christmas Eve last year, has the task of coordinating the activities for the rebuilding and the re-launching of the Salesian presence. In order to respond to the needs, some workers and volunteers from other organizations such as Jovenes y Desarrollo (JyD) and International Voluntary Service for Development (VIS) have become part of the Foundation.

Salesian centers are starting up their work again.

*Port-au-Prince:* at the Ecole Nationale des Arts et Métiers (ENAM) lessons are taking place in prefabricated buildings made available by the National Ministry for Education and Professional Formation.

In spite of the precarious situation the Salesians are able to provide breakfast (a cup of milk and bread) for about 9,000 middle school pupils. A new kitchen should be installed soon to provide food for the children from the schools in Cité Soleil and La Saline, the poorest districts in the area.

Over 300 children in Lakay (street children reception center) are being cared for on a daily basis by various international organizations such as Misereor and Austrian Caritas. In Cité Soleil and Fleuriot-Tabarre lessons have started up again in tents while they wait to be able to use the prefabricated structures offered by VIS and Jugendhilfe Lateinamerika (JUHILA).

*Thorland:* providing accommodation for 12,000 refugees continues. Here the Salesians are engaged in providing material and psychological help for the displaced people as they wait to be re-located. Work with youth groups, which has never been interrupted, continues with cultural, recreational, and spiritual activities.

*Gressier:* academic work and providing hospitality at the Salesian studentate continue under canvas. The NGO Jugend Dritte Welt (JDW) and JyD have promised to cover the financial costs of the rebuilding of the study center and a part of the elementary schools.

*Pétionville*: all activities have started up again. The boundary walls have been rebuilt thanks to funds provided by VIS. Projects for the provincial house, for the Center for Higher Studies, and for the postnovitiate are going well; approval for the projects from the National Department for studies in the area is awaited.

*Cap-Haitien*: part of the teachers' salaries and the school meals are being covered by help from Salesian Missions (New Rochelle), and the JUHILA organization has approved the plans for the refurbishment of the school facilities at Gonaives.

*Fort-Liberté*: activities have started again thanks also to the help from a sister from Spain engaged in assisting and training the students in the school of nursing. As far as the agricultural activities there are concerned, Jugend Ein Welt is looking after them.

In general one can see a lot taking place. The Community of the Mission of Don Bosco, a member group in the Salesian Family, is committed to offering its own support, and tomorrow three volunteers are setting out with others taking their places in the months ahead.

Also to be noted was the "Gospel Roads" mission trip organized by the Youth Ministry Office of the New Rochelle Province at the end of May and into June. See <https://mail.google.com/mail/?shva=1#inbox/128ffac2d50b2327> Additional photos available from Meg Fraino of the YM Office: [mfraino@salesianym.com](mailto:mfraino@salesianym.com)

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