

# Mission to Haiti

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THIS WAS OUR FOURTH TRIP TO HAITI, but the first time we had ventured in and around Port Au Prince; we saw firsthand the earthquake conditions that still prevail there. Even after huge amounts of money have been poured into this city, things seemed to be worse rather than better. Many of the collapsed buildings were still in ruins, rubble filled alleyways and vacant lots, narrow streets were in disrepair, and electricity was intermittent. Numerous tent cities were erected after the earthquake and violence, rape, sickness, and crime run rampant there. Garbage and debris filled the surrounding hills and waterways and the smoke of burning garbage was seen and smelled everywhere. In contrast, a few yards from all this hopelessness and despair we saw the beautiful blue sea, sparkling in the sun.

How could so much money have been dropped into Haiti with so little apparent results? We asked our hosts to explain it to us. Some pointed to the corruption in the government. Some said the NGOs used the funds to build comfortable quarters and to purchase expensive vehicles. After advertising costs to raise funds, a salary for the staff, and frequent trips to the US, very little was left for the people.

Others explained the reality with an example. If an organization donates 1000 bags of rice for an orphanage and school, the rice then sits on the dock until they find someone to transport it into the mountains. The transporter usually charges half of whatever they transport, so 500 bags of rice is now gone. The head of the orphanage doesn't receive a salary so they take half of the remaining rice and sell it to support their family. The remaining rice is given to the teachers and maintenance people for their salaries and the orphanage/school is left with 100 bags of rice to feed hundreds of children

for a year. Obviously these are only opinions and the figures are not exact, but the examples gave us a better understanding of the problem.

Being in on the ground floor of a new evangelization program here has its benefits and challenges. Fr. Madelon, the priest in charge of the new missions program has a real passion for bringing people to know Jesus. The Archbishop is strongly behind the program and asked two representatives from each parish to attend our workshop. Fr. Madelon has built up a strong core team of two doctors and two engineers who are well respected and know how to make things happen. But they all face tough challenges in their personal lives as well as starting a new ministry. As time went on they really began to understand that Renewal Ministries is a great resource with lots of information they didn't even know existed!

As in many countries where we minister, it soon became apparent that nothing ever works the way it should. Transportation for the participants was unreliable and expensive, which caused delays. Cooking for a hundred or so people over wood fires, and washing dishes in water that has to be heated by wood fires was time consuming and difficult. Electricity outages were common. The translators were both Baptist and had never heard of some of the concepts of our Catholic faith. Teaching was slow and laborious, but our separated brothers got a good dose of truth! However, we persevered and I know God was doing great things.

Most of the facilities in the center area of Port Au Prince had been destroyed so we held the evangelization training about 1 ½ hours out of town at a new Don Bosco orphanage and school. Unfortunately the electricity was intermittent and with no electricity we had no





water! Fortunately the temperature was really nice the whole time we were there and at night it was comfortably cool.

We rose early for Mass, had breakfast, and taught until noon. We then had lunch and began again from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. We taught on the theory of evangelization from *Evangelization in the Modern World* and *Mission of the Redeemer*, and about empowerment in the Holy Spirit and techniques of presenting the Gospel message. Nancy taught about freedom in Jesus Christ. One day I gave a basic overview on Catholic apologetics and taught on Marian Doctrine. The Haitian core team then taught on the specific evangelization program the Archdiocese has formulated while we and our interpreters went out to minister programs at various parishes.

At Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish we began with a candlelight procession from the new church building, which is still under construction after nine years, to their temporary outdoor facility. The dimly lit facility was packed with people and it was difficult to see how many were there, but we were told that around 600 people came for the service. Nancy shared part of her testimony and about how to remove blocks to drawing closer to the Lord. I gave the basic Gospel message and invited all to make a deeper commitment to Jesus. We ended the evening with a commissioning and healing service and people really entered in! Afterwards we asked for testimonies and many people reported healings and new hope for the future.

Another late afternoon we went to Immaculate Conception Parish. Fr. Raphael was so excited to have us there. Once again we ministered outdoors as the old church had been destroyed and the new one was under construction. There appeared to be around 100 to 150 people in attendance. Father apologized for the low attendance and explained that it was market day and many were working. This parish had a lively music ministry and we had some great praise and worship. I once again began with the basic Gospel message and Nancy taught on the need for forgiveness and led the people in a prayer of deeper commitment to the Lord. We then talked about healing and invited Jesus to come and heal; the testimonies of freedom and healing were really great.

Overall the trip was powerful and a good beginning. Our friend Fr. Madelon and his team now have a much better idea of what the Lord is doing around the world in the area of evangelization and really seem excited to have us back next year to move deeper into the ministry of evangelization. Some of the questions from the participants showed a significant need for personal evangelization. Voodoo is very prevalent and is even accepted by some of the clergy and the participants of our workshop. Broken marriages/divorce is also a big problem. In short, this new commission on evangelization in Port Au Prince has a great heart and zeal, but is looking for more help in its implementation. Renewal Ministries can stand with them as we share our resources and knowledge to build the kingdom. +

▲ Almost 600 people gathered in the dimly lit facility of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish where Lloyd presented the basic Gospel message and invited all to make a deeper commitment to Jesus, followed by a commissioning and healing service.

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