

The Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti

During the month of April, many people throughout our Diocese have had the opportunity to meet and to hear Father Kesner Gracia, the rector at St. Paul's Church in Petit-Trou-de-Nippes, Haiti. Father Kesner came to Colorado to bring the story of Haiti to life, and in doing so, to promote the Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti, a \$2.2 million capital campaign of the Colorado Haiti Project.

As he passionately describes the utterly inhumane conditions under which most people live, our hearts and souls are deeply moved. The conditions he describes are truly unimaginable to most of us. On the heels of the hurricanes that hit the island last fall, a severe drought has occurred. Most of the people in the Petit-trou area depend on a small garden and their animals to survive. The drought has cracked the earth and laid waste to the gardens. Many of the animals have died. People have limited access to water and most eat only occasionally. People are dying. As we listen to Father Kesner, we are reminded that Haiti is not just some distant place, Haiti is not a political issue, Haiti is not just another name on the laundry list of the world's problems. Haiti has a face, a human face.

Haiti is made up of children somewhere between innocence and understanding of their situation. Haiti is made up of parents, hoping for a better world but hardened by their struggle to survive. Haiti is made up of people who have lost hope, and people who cling to it, hoping for a better life. A life that goes beyond walking miles each day to collect a few plastic jugs of water from a mountain spring or a community well. A life that goes beyond working a small plot of land in an attempt to grow enough food to survive. A life that goes beyond wondering what the world beyond Petit-trou is like, the one that's shown on the ragged page torn from the magazine that proudly decorates the wall of the palm frond hut.

And so, here we are . . . confronted by a new awareness, something else to upset our relatively comfortable situation. Here we are, confronted by the abandoned baby on the doorstep. How do we respond? Do we close the door and pretend we did not see her face or hear her cries? Do we acknowledge her existence, offer our sympathies and then move on? Or do we take a risk . . . opening our hearts and listening to what God would have us do?

Many of you are coming to know about the Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti. It is one way to respond and take action. One goal of the Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti is to reach all Episcopal churches in Colorado to share this story of the people in Petit Trou de Nippes and their vision for a better life. We need Episcopalians to help this worthy project by representing their parish in this campaign. Many people have already joined us in this undertaking. Church representatives will help to coordinate a program within their church, working in conjunction with the chairperson for their region. Moreover, the Colorado Haiti Project has trained presenters who are anxious to come to your church to share their first-hand experiences in Haiti. If you are interested in getting involved, please talk with your rector who can put you in touch with the appropriate chairperson.

Invariably, the success of this campaign will depend on the committed efforts and the generosity of many people. Father Kesner reminds us that the success of the Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti and ultimately the independence and autonomy of our brothers and sisters in Haiti, will depend not only on our financial support but on our mental and spiritual support.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Haiti, and in doing so, we will find that they make a difference in ours.

... Don Snyder

Note: Don is the General Chair for the Three Bishops' Fund for Haiti