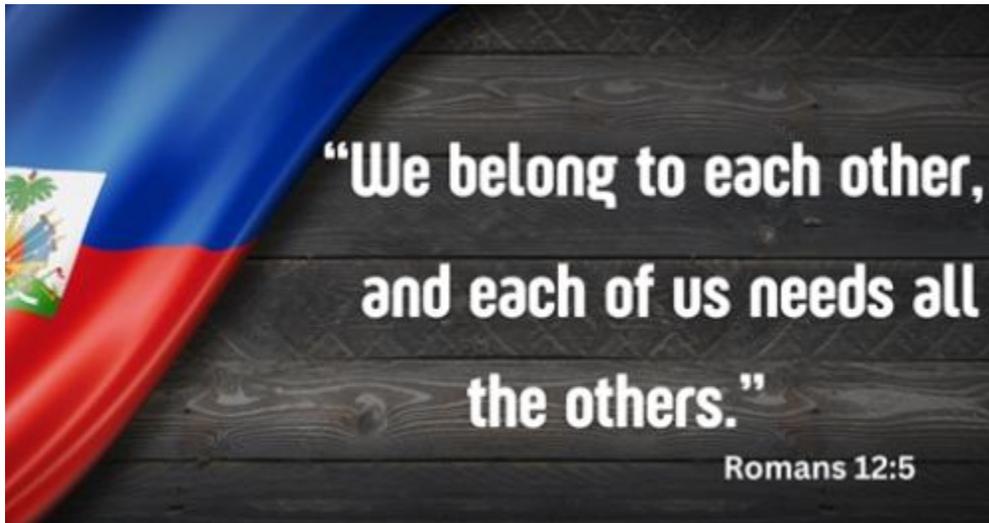


Haiti in Crisis: A Call to Stand in Faith, Hope, and Solidarity

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To say the least, the past few years have been tumultuous for the people of Haiti. Insurrection, gang violence, kidnappings, stolen property, a lack of any viable government, drought, and torrential flooding have virtually destroyed the country and dashed the hopes of a hurting people. Although I would not have believed it possible, life continues to worsen for the people of Haiti. People who have lived with virtually nothing all their lives now have even less. People who are used to being hungry now find themselves faced with starvation. Parents, once strong and proud as they faced the challenges life threw at them, now find themselves embarrassed and broken, as they can no longer send their children to school or provide them with a daily meal, not to mention any medical care they may need.

As the world watches (or more likely, turns a blind eye to the situation), Haiti is slowly sinking into oblivion. Her children are dying horrible, unnecessary deaths; her young women and men are hoping to flee the country in search of a better life (or any life at all); and her parents and elders have become discouraged and now live in despair. And who can blame them? For the blame does not lie with them—it lies with us and with others like us. We of the first world, for the most part, do not have a clue how the rest of the world lives—nor, it seems, do enough people care. We live as though their suffering is not ours, as though their needs have nothing to do with our lifestyles and lack of concern.

When Pope John Paul II spoke so forcefully during his historic visit to Haiti in 1983, proclaiming, “Things here must change!” he no doubt meant change for the better. No one could have imagined that the change in Haiti would only worsen the lives of those who call this land their home. Positive change, however, remains possible, and the people of Haiti daily are striving to bring this about. They can’t do it alone, but it won’t happen with interference either. Certainly, assistance is needed—but not domination. Aid is needed, but not the kind with strings attached.



Although not often heard throughout our land, much of this type of support is already being offered, though not from governments or non-governmental organizations. Many parishes in the Diocese of Norwich and across the United States are involved in a twinning relationship with a parish or institution in Haiti. The Diocese of Norwich and other dioceses have formed similar relationships with sister dioceses in Haiti. Much support is offered to send children to school and to provide medical assistance (though more always is needed) as the situation in Haiti allows.

Scripture often reminds us that God delights in all people. Therefore, we, too, should delight in one another—people of every race and nation. This is not to say that we should accept the harshness and inhumanity in which Haitians and so many others live. We should not. We should, however, delight and rejoice in who they are and in the relationship that we share with them—all children of the one God.

Relationship seems to be the key to all things. As the Father, Son, and Spirit remain united but distinct, so we are called to this same unity, one with another—both accepting and respecting our similarities and differences. We are different, yet one. And so it is that we are called to share one another's sufferings. St. Paul goes so far as to say that we should

boast in our sufferings, for “suffering produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint...” (*Romans 5:3–5*).

As people of God, we are people of hope, and the people of Haiti certainly incarnate this truth for us. As St. Paul also reminds us: “Hope is not hope if its object is seen.” How the people of Haiti continue to survive at all and where their strength comes from would be impossible to imagine were it not for the faith that we share and the Gospel we proclaim. We don’t see an end in sight to the problems facing the Haitian people, but we can continue to share their hope for a better future, to stand with them in solidarity, and to make their plight known to others who can help. Together, as people of faith, as members of this diocesan family, we are called to support our suffering sisters and brothers wherever they are, to walk with them, and to work with them to bring about sustainable justice and lasting peace.

The role of our diocesan ministry among the people of Haiti, as originally expressed, is:

“In responding to the Gospel mandate, we choose to walk in solidarity with the Haitian people, recognizing them as family, promoting their dignity, and encouraging their self-determination. Therefore, through our presence, collaboration, education for justice in Haiti and the U.S., and channeling of resources and talents, we commit ourselves to enable the Haitian people to realize their full human potential. Joining hands and hearts with the original diocesan groups who journeyed to Haiti and whose dream was to work with the Haitian people, we continue to collaborate in building a new Haiti, born of suffering, courage, hope, love, compassion, and justice—a new Haiti standing as a dignified member of the global community.”

Put succinctly, our mission is **“helping Haitians help Haitians.”** May we keep this goal ever in mind.

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Please continue to pray for the people of Haiti and for an end to the rampant violence and needless kidnappings and deaths that occur daily, and also for the formation of a truly caring, humanitarian government. If you would like to offer more support to our diocesan Outreach to Haiti during this Jubilee Year of Hope—by aiding the clinic, supporting a child’s education, or donating to the ongoing needs of our ministry—please visit our website at outreachtohaiti.org.

As our diocesan Outreach to Haiti begins its search for the next Executive Director of this ministry, please keep this process, all who are involved in it, and, most importantly, the people of Haiti, in your prayer.



By Rev. Gerry Kirby

Father Gerry is a former chair of the board for the original Haitian Ministries for the Diocese of Norwich, former Personal Representative of the Bishop of Norwich to our Diocesan Mission to Haiti, Interim Director of Norwich Mission House, and currently serves as Pastor of All Saints Parish in Somersville and a member of the Search Committee for the next Executive Director of Outreach to Haiti.

Please share this link on your social media so that we can widen the search for our next [Executive Director](#).



**Outreach
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