



THE FATH JOURNEY
MGSOSA
MISSIONS

IT'S TIME TO LOVE, SERVE, GO.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
07.03-07.09
2011

He brought us from there to here.
Now let us go from here to there for Him.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others. Faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" - 1 Peter 4:10

MALANKARA ARCHDIOCESE OF THE SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

Dominican Outreach Mission Trip 2011

PHAETON, HAITI & PUERTA PLATA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC | JULY 6-7, 2011

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True Beauty

by Varghese Monai Karuthalackal

At times, lessons in life are learned from kids. We had the great privilege to go to an orphanage that Fr. Dale helped build. As we walked through the property we saw many hand prints on the wall which I came to find were the signature of the orphans in residence.

I stood there in that orphanage. It's a place of inner peace and shows the true beauty of this world. From my personal stand point, I felt sad for these kids. It really hit my heart that the disappointments in my own life were nothing when compared to the experience of these little ones.

I saw the joy and happiness in the kids when we entered the room. I was not afraid to go up to these strangers whom I now count as friends. The quality of love and nurture they receive from their caregivers is a gift that I wish I too could offer. We sang songs with them and any language barrier was no longer there. You can see the priceless smiles on their faces.

As soon as we started singing and clapping, a little girl extended her hand to me and I extended my hands to her. She then stood up and walked over and hugged Lispin. You could see the love, (continued on Page 2 Column 1)

Don't Take for Granted

by Shana Kadavil

Throughout our lives, we have been showered with abundance. We are blessed to never experience the extreme suffering and agony that people in poverty endure. We are fortunate to have family, friends, education, housing, etc. Sometimes, we forget to be grateful for the little details in life. Visiting the Haitian village definitely has left a mark that will forever change my perspective of life.

I had the chance to visit the children in a new school that was built in the middle of nowhere. The school was quite different from a typical school; it was just a simple four-walled rectangular structure of cement bricks topped with metal roofing. There were cut-outs made in the walls, where one could assume windows and doors would be in place. But they were just empty openings, exposing the two-roomed school to the scorching heat and arid dusty breeze.

Once I saw the children happily singing songs and playing games, I was mesmerized with mixed emotions. Being a person who has been struggling with her faith, I realized that I saw the eyes of Jesus through these children. I would always be concerned that God might not be (continued on Page 2 Column 2)

Haiti

The Haitian people have struggled for generations. Dominican Outreach tries to break the poverty cycle through education, partnership, and love in the small town of Phaeton.



happiness, protection, and the acceptance that was given through that heartfelt hug.

As we stood there and praised God, I realized there is no absolute difference between these orphans and other human beings. We are all indeed children of God. There is a song that comes to mind that I sing through my own days of weakness that I will share:

*Ithratholam yehova sahaayichu
Ithratholam dhaivamenne nadatthi
Onnumillaimayil ninnenne uyartthi
Ithratholam yehova sahaayichu*

This song is telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ has helped us walk through the tough days. I do not have anything to offer to God, but He compelled us through every difficulty. God helps these helpless children and I have witnessed God move through these kids.

To conclude, my mother gave me a book before I came to Dominican Republic and here is a little quote from it:



"The Romans of old used to say, 'There is nothing more useful than sun and salt.' In the time of Jesus salt held significance. He did not hesitate to tell his followers 'You are the salt of the earth.' Salt lends flavor to things. And He also said, 'You are the light of the world.' He demanded nothing else but that they should shine" (pg. 128).

As I leave from this great island, the memories and experiences will have a place in my small heart. There are a lot of needs in this orphanage, but there is something each of us can do - a simple task - keep these kids in our prayer!
*Maurus, J. Living the Marvel of Life.
Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, 2006.*



answering my prayers, but after seeing these children, I questioned myself about who was answering *their* prayers. Why am I complaining when their needs are more important?

At that moment, I realized that we should never take things for granted because there are countless people who lack the things that we have. We must always be thankful for everything, not just the jobs, houses, and family, but also for the small things, like doors and windows to our houses, air-conditioned homes, and much more. Prayer is an essential part of this because not only do we need to talk to God in what we need and desire, but more importantly we must thank God for what we have.

FAST FACT

Haiti is generally rated the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Prayer Impact



We had a chance to pray in Malayalam and Syriac at Puerta Plata's cathedral. Fr. Dale is well known to the Roman Catholic Bishop. (July 5th)



Sports



Love is definitely the universal language. Another language that is nearly as well understood is the voice of sport. Baseball is the most widely followed sport, with the island supplying several major league players in the USA. Next comes football (soccer), and then basketball. Our team played a little b-ball with the kids, who felt quite comfortable teaching a few lessons of their own.



This crab decided to crawl all the way from the sea to visit our doorstep. Good thing he could not open the door! Seafood is a staple here, often enjoyed with rice. Just ask the flakey, fried fish below! This particular meal also came with ehtthaka appam (fried plantain)!



Expedition Haiti: Hurt, Hope, & Hearing the Call

One-third of Hispaniola is occupied by the Republic of Haiti. However, perhaps 5/6th of the island's misery is on that side. When the earthquake of January 2010 struck, the already destitute were further challenged by the utter devastation which ensued. The capital, Port-au-Prince, literally crumbled, forcing migration, homelessness, crime, and disease into the countryside. Of course, population movement on this scale did not spare the Dominican Republic, which absorbed its fair share of refugees.



Despite this bleak scenario, Dominican Outreach was able to partner with local church ministries in a small, struggling fishing village of about 3000 to create a school. Many of the poorest here cannot afford to educate their children. The inhabitants of the relatively unknown town of Phaeton, near Libertad, on the northern coast of Haiti, received a helping hand from far across the sea through Fr. Dale's mediation.

Our Visit to the School

Dominican Outreach's primary focus has been education from the start. The value of instruction well predates Fr. Dale's mission in the New World. He actually had a pupil back in the Old, at Tur Abdin to be



He is now none other than Mor Polycarpus Aydin, the current bishop of the Netherlands.



This illustrious student has not forgotten his teacher. When the need arose for a champion to build a school in Phaeton, Mor Polycarpus enabled the transfer of approximately \$10000 from our loving church members in Europe to cover land, construction, and staff expenses.

The school now caters to 50 students in two classrooms. Twenty of these are orphans. They receive instruction from a single teacher per class, and students are segregated according to age. The school is managed by a local pastor. A feeding program provides one meal a day and necessary daily contact to ensure that each student progresses satisfactorily.



These children receive instruction in Creole, a dialect of French that has influences from English, Spanish, and native African languages. When we arrived, we were treated to songs from the pupils in Creole and French.

We were all impressed by the outgoing nature of the children. They were well dressed and well nourished. They liked music so much that they tolerated a few songs from us as well. We were able to sing in both English and Malayalam (and a little French!)

Thalayam, Tholam, Mootum, Kallum ... Tout por Jesu! (Head and shoulders, knees and toes...all for Jesus!)

The Needs are Still Great

As you may be able to notice from the photos, the school remains unfinished. A sturdy roof and four cinderblock walls are up, and the land has been purchased, but much is still required to create a permanent center for the town's young people. The foremost need is to put up a fence around the purchased land. If no fence is constructed, the land may be squatted upon and lost. Once a fence is placed, then the proper paperwork may be filed to secure the premises in perpetuity.

Of course doors, paint, and a generator are other top priorities. Fr. Dale has a dream to call the school "Mor Gabriel," after the patron of our monastery at Tur Abdin, once construction is complete.

There are approximately 1000 Catholics and 1000 Baptists in the village. The Catholics have a school, and the Baptists have an education program as well. Dominican Outreach comes in to work with the poor who do not belong to either community. Fr. Dale envisions a chance to bridge the gap between the two communities and partner to deliver more educational services to Phaeton. "Ecole Mor Gabriel" is the first step in this long process of building trust.

Getting There



Perhaps some of our backsides are still sore from the wild ride to Phaeton. We initially took a chartered van to the border, which is a filthy cesspool despite the public health post just inside. We had to pay a toll and get our passports stamped to leave the DR, and then pay up some more to get



into Haiti. Once in, we piled into a half ton pickup and drove off into the Haitian wastelands. Actually, the area is sparsely populated, but quite lush. Surely, we thought, someone could cultivate this land. Fr. Dale explained that even if someone wanted to create a productive business, the legal framework and infrastructure just isn't present to support it.

The road became extremely bumpy after we left the paved section. It took about 1 hour of potholes and rocks to get to the school. Being in the open air of the pickup truck bed gave us a new perspective on roughing it. During our return we were extremely pleased to find relief in coconuts.



The Town

Phaeton is a fishing village. There apparently is no other industry, no banks, no agriculture, and no restaurants. There isn't a central market. However, there is a woman who has a bit bigger house, and here we saw soda pop bottles, so we know someone must have at least a bit of discretionary income. Of course, the lottery is well advertised.



Unicef (United Nations) health tent designed to help fight cholera

The locals play and work without electricity. Not too long ago a couple of hand water pumps were installed. These are a definite lifeline. We saw the collection of drinking water as well as someone bathing in the water.



On the coast a developer is building a swimming resort. It's good to know that perhaps more will hear of the town as a result. The water seems pristine and well suited for development. Much infrastructure must be constructed if Phaeton is to fully benefit.



FAST FACT

The money in Haiti is called the "goud." It's nothing but a disaster. The heroes depicted on cash notes are the principal foes of the Dominicans. The Dominicans reciprocate by putting the Haitians' enemies on their bills.

A Clinic on the Frontier

A concern the mission has about CEPROSH health clinics in the Dominican Republic is that they often discriminate against Haitians. Perhaps this is understandable, but since a great deal of charity is provided to the DR it stinks of ingratitude.

On our return to the DR we stopped at the border town of Dajabon. The name derives from the local soap industry. After lunch we visited a CEPROSH clinic. We were able to interview the director, who assured us that Haitians too are given services. They need a referral from the local public hospital, where they have translators, and then they receive equal access.



We obtained some good information from the director about the demographics of the local population. They are certainly worried about cholera, though they have not seen many cases. Their greatest need are workers to help with community education and outreach.





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