

St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish twinned with St. Michel's Church, Saltadere, Haiti



Preschool class with teacher

In the 1990's the diocese of Richmond began working with the diocese of Hinche in Haiti to establish one on one relationships between parishes in each diocese. St. Michel's Parish in the village of Saltadère, Haiti, is twinned with St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and Holy Comforter Parish in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Representatives of the two parishes have visited Saltadère several times in the last few years, most recently in May, 2010. Some of the trips have included medical personnel to provide much-needed aid to the people of Saltadère. Over the last three years, UVA—CSM students have visited as a

group working with the school children. With the earthquake of January 12, 2010, 148 refugee families have returned to Saltadère, stretching the scarce resources of the town.

The essence of twinning is to build real friendships between Americans and Haitians. This is just as important, in the long run, as the material aid we can give. Traveling to Haiti – and, when possible, bringing Haitians to visit us – is an essential part of the program. In our parish the oversight for the twinning relationship is carried out by the Haiti Committee (see our weekly report in the bulletin—*The Haitian Station*). Some activities have involved other ministries of our parish, including Respect Life and Christian Formation to provide Safe Birth Kits and Student Health Kits to Saltadère. Additionally, the school children of Lekol St. Michel have benefited from an Eagle Scout project that gathered and donated clothing for the children.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead and we always welcome new members to this Ministry!

Time Commitment:

Committee meetings

1 ½ hours per month

Volunteer work at UVA concessions stands

5-7 hours per month

Trips to Haiti

7-10 days

Haitian women on the road





Secondary students, with teachers, show artwork for notecards

St. Michel's parish school has a new school building, dedicated in February 2007, which houses eleven classrooms and is constructed entirely of durable cement-block. The total cost of the school construction has exceeded \$130,000.

The students eat at their desks in their classrooms, because there is no dining hall. Now a proper enclosed kitchen and storage area has replaced the crude outdoor kitchen and an existing classroom will be converted to a refectory. Additional funds are still needed to convert that old classroom into a dining hall.

As well, the school garden is due to benefit from a project to provide irrigation from the nearby river. The twinning parishes have received a grant from the diocese to help fund the pump and piping for the irrigation and, as well, the agronomist to educate the school and the community.

Parishioners can support the school by sponsoring one or more children at the school. Information on sponsorship is available at the Haiti Table on the lower level of the church



Rectory at St. Michel

For more information:

<http://www.richmonddiocese.org/haiti/>
General information about all the "twinning programs"

<http://www.st-thomas-aquinas.org/>
Click on Parish Life, then click Haiti, to view the committee's web page.

<http://www.saltadere.org> to learn about our activities in Saltadere and to view recent pictures

Or contact sponsorshipprogram@gmail.com for information on sponsoring a child

Thanks for your interest!