

# Haiti in our Hands

Compassion and solidarity for the people of Haiti



## Monthly Newsletter

### Over 75 Couples Married in Chauffard

On Sunday, March 4th over 75 couples gathered with friends and family in the Chauffard church to take their marriage vows. The Church of the Immaculate Conception, still scarred with cracks from the 2010 earthquake, was bedecked with tulle and wreaths with flowers in honor of the unprecedented event. The new Archbishop of Port-au-Prince and a number of priests made their way into the mountains to assist Father Raymond in the ceremony. The church choir and musicians provided the music. Many of the couples were wearing beautiful new dresses or suits purchased with your donations. Everyone was welcome to participate in a celebration meal following the ceremony. We collected \$1,350 towards the wedding clothes and reception. Father Raymond and the couples were so grateful for our help in making the day especially memorable.



### News from Chauffard:

Father Raymond has collected information about the school children to help us with our grant proposals. Students do not always attend school every year as their family many not have enough money to send all their children at once. It's not unusual for a student to skip a few years and then start right back where they left off. The Chauffard school currently has students in preschool through 9th grade. The preschool class in Chauffard has 56 students: Desir Ozario is 4 years old and Dorisca Mesilene is 9 years old. There are 55 students in the first year class, including five year old Elme Sonson and 13 year old Alourdes St-Hilaire. Eighth year has the fewest number of students: 7 aged 15-18.

### Upcoming Events:

March 23 - 25: **Book & Bake Sale**

March thru April 1: **Collection for Sea Container Shipment** (see back)

Wednesdays in March: **Soup Suppers** donations go to school lunch program

June 16 - 17: **Haiti Speaker Weekend**

For more information, call  
Kate McMahon (315-492-2378).

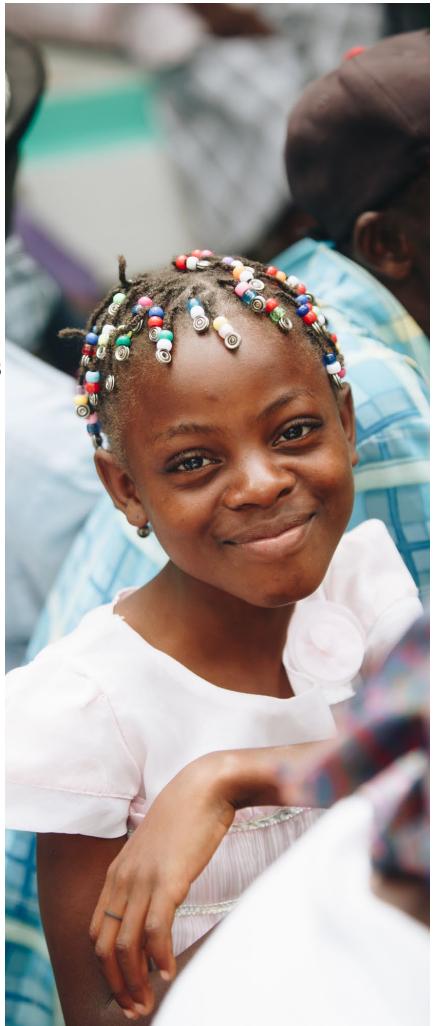
**Supporting the Church of the Immaculate Conception,  
Chauffard, Haiti, Father Raymond, Parish Priest**

## Why We Love the Sea Container Shipment

Every year in April, the Parish Twinning Program of the Americas coordinates the packing and shipping of two cargo containers at a warehouse near their headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee. We can send any donations as long as the boxes or crates can be moved by a person with a dolly. All we have to do is box up our donations (in sturdy boxes!) and write up labels saying they are to go to Father Raymond at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Chauffard. We pack the labels and our fee of \$8 per cubic foot into a box. We pay by weight to mail our boxes by UPS to TN. The Parish Twinning Program volunteers take our per cubic foot fee and tape our labels onto our boxes. They load our boxes into the giant containers along with the humanitarian donations from other twinning parishes. Once filled, the sea containers are loaded onto flatbed trucks for the drive to the coast. At a port, the containers are placed on a cargo ship going to Haiti. It usually takes 2 months for the containers to reach the docks at Port-au-Prince, be met by a Parish Twinning Program representative, and be cleared through Customs. Releasing items from Customs is not easy. When we last sent a 4-wheel drive truck to our twin parish, it was held up at the docks for over 6 months!

In Port-au-Prince, the Parish Twinning Program staff unloads the containers and contacts Father Raymond to pick up his boxes. Over the years we have sent from 4 to 14 boxes of basic medical supplies, toiletries, and school supplies to the people of our twin parish, along with a hospital bed and exam tables for the clinic. It's so generous of the Parish Twinning Program to provide this service. The regular mail to Haiti is unreliable and the shipping companies are very expensive. It costs us \$40 per checked suitcase for our medical mission volunteers to bring supplies on our flights to Haiti. We pick up old suitcases from friends and the Rescue Mission all year so that the bags can be left there and we do not have to pay \$40 per suitcase to bring them back again!

We are still accepting donations through Easter Sunday. You can leave vitamins, reading glasses, pain relievers, bar soap, tooth brushes and toothpaste, Tums, antibacterial cream, hydrocortisone, pencils, and pencil sharpeners at the church entrances or on the rectory porch. Your donations will be of great value to a family in Chauffard who has no access to stores.



*Please drop off your donations on the church porches before Easter Sunday. They are greatly appreciated!*

## School Lunch Program Update

Our funds for the School Lunch Program are sent to the bank account for the Church of the Immaculate Conception via a wire transfer. Our money "leaves" Syracuse to travel through a big New York City bank, and a big Port-au-Prince bank, before it can come to rest in the small bank where Father Raymond can access it (minus \$80 of bank fees that were lost along the way). This virtual voyage of your donations can take from 2-3 weeks! We have enough funds to pay to feed the students their school lunch through the end of April. That leaves 2 more months of school before summer. We hope to raise the \$10,000 needed for the school lunches for May and June and the \$2,000 in salaries for the 39 teachers and 8 school lunch cooks as soon as possible.

