

# A True Partnership

St. Joseph in Medor, Haiti – OLQP in Arlington, VA

OLQP Catholic Church in Arlington, VA, joined St. Joseph parish of Medor, Haiti, in a parish twinning relationship in 1997. The Haitian parish encompasses a rural community of 40,000 people spread over 74 square miles in the mountains of central Haiti. Medor is far from the electric grid and has no running water, sewage, or trash disposal. Its roads are impassable most of the year. Like the rest of Haiti, the village of Medor has been devastated by a succession of hurricanes and earthquakes.

OLQP has provided funds to build the primary and secondary schools, and continues to support a good portion of the expenses of the schools, as well as agro-forestry, clean water, sanitation, and health activities. The main objectives are to help the people of Medor raise their own standard of living and to deepen the relationship between the people of both communities. The Haitians contribute their time, labor, and whatever funds they can to sustain these programs. They identify priorities, manage programs, and do the work in the community.

**Education:** The twinning program helps support the education of about 3,000 children in kindergarten through 13<sup>th</sup> grade in five schools. Students receive a hot lunch each day. Students also receive de-worming medications and salt fortified with iodine and diethylcarbamazine to support brain development and to prevent goiter and elephantiasis. Students excel in national exams, and more than two-dozen graduates now attend universities in Haiti, including four at a university dedicated to creating wealth in rural Haiti, the University of Fondwa.

**Agro-forestry:** Most of the people in St Joseph parish are farmers. The agro-forestry project educates farmers to use improved farming methods and plant trees. Haitian technicians of the Smallholders Farmers Alliance (SFA) trained local farmers to establish nurseries in eight communities, and participants have planted an estimated 699,500 tree seedlings so far. Farmers are planting coffee seedlings to produce coffee as a cash crop. The farmers receive tools and bean seeds and after harvest, they return seeds to the seed bank to share with others. The SFA began a program to help farmers raise healthier goats and cows and started school gardens at two schools.

**Clean Water:** The clean water program provides a 5-gallon bucket in-home water purification system for households and teaches people to use bleach to purify their water. The program built two cisterns to harvest rainwater for Zorange, a community with no water source, and capped six springs.

**Latrines:** The sanitation program seeks to halt open-air defecation by encouraging each household to build its own latrine. The partners built public latrines at the schools and 287 individual family composting latrines, called arbor-loos.

**Health:** A Haitian nun runs the parish clinic and visiting teams from OLQP bring some requested medicines and supplies during periodic mission trips. These medical teams have conducted free medical and vision clinics as well. They helped decrease the incidence of cholera in Medor, not only by treating those with the disease, but also by teaching the community about cholera, how to prevent it, and how to create oral rehydration packets.

All of this work is ongoing and needs continuing support.



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