

Holy Family Missionary Visit to Beau Sejour, Haiti – April 23-28, 2009  
Representatives: Karen Jensen and Kathleen Kirkpatrick

- The trek across the 10 mountains by motorcycle, walking and mule was extremely difficult this year due to the 4 hurricanes that struck Haiti in 2008. The passageway is now filled with deep trenches and crevices and the terrain was very difficult to traverse. I took 6 hours to reach Beau Sejour
- Arrival in Beau Sejour, saw the new clinic the community built. Old clinic too badly damaged by hurricanes Gustav and Hannah to be repaired. New clinic has 5 rooms, a bathroom (no running water of course) and a large open waiting area. All of the cement, window grills and rebar were brought across the 10 mountains on the backs and heads of the people in the community. So far \$15K, \$6,700 need
- The community lost most of their gardens in the hurricanes but they have replanted. Father Ronal lost his goats and other livestock. His one remaining goat just had little kid and the hen now has 9 new chicks. He and the community are regrouping from the disasters and moving forward. Father is most appreciative for the HF stipend sent to St. Gabriel. It helped sustain the community during the hurricanes. It allowed him to buy food. During Hannah, the desperation for food was so great, Father went USAID for food, they had to deliver by helicopter, 2 mountains over from St. Gabriel. HF funds were instrumental in their survival.
- The building housing the grain grinder with the generator has major damage and the grinder is not working. Father hopes to replace the building as it is very badly damaged but it is not a priority so there is no grinding currently being done.
- Father Ronal has 8 chapels now as one was destroyed by the hurricanes and has not been rebuilt. In the 5 schools there are 1,500 children some of whom walk 2-3 hours a day to school and some without shoes. The school serves them lunch and it most likely is the only food they get.
- Friday we visited St. Gabriel School, all 12 grades. They have split sessions and 500 students. The children were very happy to see us and were glad to pose for pictures that we could bring back to HF and share with you. The school also has started to teach English in grades 7-12.
- They were so thankful for our being there and were so joyful with the quilt that we gave them so they now can see a picture of our parish. Father showed them the back of the quilt with the HF prayer in French/English, they cheered. They pray for HF each week and are most grateful for our prayers and our assistance.
- It is impossible for me to relay to you the hardships of the St. Gabriel community, but they are a faith community of sisters and brothers that restores one's own beliefs and I feel so blessed to make the journey even with all the difficulties involved. Being able to look into their eyes sustains me.
- As we descended the mountains at 6 a.m. on Monday, the community was out working with their picks and shovels trying to regrade the "road." Unbelievable initiative against all odds.

Hand in Hand with Haiti Committee needs "time philanthropists." Please search your hearts and hear your Baptismal Call to discipleship and join us. The next meeting is June 8 in the church office Room 201. Just 1 1/2hrs/mo. Check our webpage for info/updates. Please keep the St. Gabriel community in your prayers. Thank you