

## **GIVE A CHILD A CHANCE----SPONSOR A STUDENT IN OUR SISTER PARISH**

A mission team of 10 representing St. Joe Parish recently travelled to Plaine du Nord, Haiti, where we spent a week sharing with our sister parish, St. Jacques (St. James). These mission trips graphically demonstrate our love for our impoverished brothers and sisters in the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. But we receive much more than we give, as our friends at St. Jacques witness to us their strong faith, the importance of their family, and the relative unimportance of material things. How blessed we are to be able to visit with them.

During our time on the ground in Haiti, we are very active. Some team members provide medical and dental care, some do construction projects, while others work with school personnel and Fr. Alain to plan how to address the many pressing needs of the parish and its members. The needs in Haiti are enormous, as evidenced by the fact that 2 of every 10 children dies before age two; 70% of the population is unemployed; and 80% of the population is undernourished. We have become somewhat familiar with Haiti, and we constantly try to discern how best to utilize the resources we can bring to bear on their problems.

The more we visit Haiti, the more convinced we become that the brightest hope for Haiti is in its children. These children are like children everywhere. They laugh and play. They have joy in their hearts, and they have dreams. They speak of becoming a doctor, a nurse, or a priest. A seven-year old recently surprised a team member by saying (through an interpreter) that he wants to be an "ambassador" when he grows up.

We've talked about it a lot. We think there are three main obstacles keeping these children from even having a chance of realizing their dreams: nutrition, health care, and education. While we are unable to assure the children that good opportunities will be available to them when they grow up, we do know that they could not take advantage of such opportunities, if they did exist, unless they are fed, healthy, and educated. So, our goals include providing food, medical care, and education to the young.

A primary vehicle for providing these basic needs is through our child sponsorship program. Children who are sponsored receive a school lunch daily; well-child check-ups and medical care when needed; and their tuition, books, supplies, and uniform are provided without charge. In addition, the child's family receives modest stipends for the child's other expenses.

Our sponsorship program began last year with 44 children. This year, we will provide at least 80 children the blessings of a sponsor. The cycle of poverty is vicious in Haiti, and children are often helpless against it unless they receive a hand up. We know

of no more meaningful and intimate way to help a truly needy child than through sponsoring them.

We come to you now, our brothers and sisters in Christ in our own parish, and we ask you to consider giving a truly needy child a chance to have a meaningful life. During a sponsorship, you would come to know your child through letters, pictures, and annual updates. Please sponsor a child for the next school year. If you feel a calling to share in this special ministry to the children in our sister parish in Haiti, your gift would be \$300. Of course, you are certainly welcome to sponsor more than one child, if you like. We believe you will help as you are able.

Please contact any one of the following for more details or to express your interest in sponsoring a child in Haiti.

Kim Spaetti (963-6175)

Diane Bassmier (963-3203)

Fr. Gene Schroeder (963-3273)

Steve & Lea Elliott (963-6166)

Linda & Butch Feulner (963-6939)

Greg Head (963-8125)