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EDITORIAL

Thinking About a New Haiti

Three weeks after Haiti's earthquake, the search for survivors has been called off, the TV crews are trickling home, and the celebrity telethon is over — usual signs that the floodwaters of compassion will be ebbing soon. The United States, Canada and other nations, meeting in Montreal last week, vowed that wouldn't happen. They began to map out a 10-year recovery plan and set the stage for a big donor conference in March.

Leaders there also acknowledged the difficult truth: It will take years of sustained help, and aid alone will never pour the foundation of a new Haiti.

In old Haiti there is still mostly horror. It is a nation of the homeless and maimed. Despite a stunning global surge of aid, many survivors still lack water, food and tents. Thousands sleep outdoors in Port-au-Prince, in terror of aftershocks. Roads, ports, communications — all in terrible shape before — are shattered. Managers and civil servants needed to help run the recovery are dead; the buildings they would run it from are flattened.

And yet there are reasons for optimism in the rubble. Well before the quake, experts like Paul Collier, an Oxford economist who was a special adviser on Haiti to the United Nations, were disseminating sensible proposals for rebuilding Haiti. The quake altered the landscape but not the validity of these ideas.

Here are a few that donor countries and Haitian leaders should take a hard look at in coming weeks:

PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY Professor Collier has noted that Haiti has considerable economic advantages, like low labor costs and a law that grants its goods preferential access to the United States market. Extending that law and encouraging investments in industries like garment-making and tourism could swiftly create tens of thousands of jobs. Rebuilding and modernizing agriculture to grow staples and export products like coffee and mangoes would mean food, cash and employment.

OPEN UP THE COUNTRYSIDE Dispersing the population beyond overbuilt, overburdened cities, like the now-shattered capital, is a good idea now cloaked in urgency. Haitians need to get out of disaster-prone areas, and well-placed development could enable them to lead sustainable lives in rural areas and new small towns instead of as the huddled, jobless urban poor. They also need help with tree-planting and topsoil restoration projects, which could create jobs and begin to undo the profound environmental damage that has left the countryside so impoverished and vulnerable to natural disasters.

REBUILD (AND MAINTAIN) INFRASTRUCTURE Haiti obviously needs homes, schools, roads, a reliable power system — but it also needs the money to maintain them, instead of the usual practice of building projects and leaving them to rot. Technology offers hope here, too. Instead of waiting for someone to build an expensive, centralized power grid, donors could think more flexibly on a smaller scale, using solar

panels and LEDs to provide electricity and light cheaply, portably and quickly.

TAP THE DIASPORA Haitian immigrants in the United States, Canada and elsewhere already send home hundreds of millions of dollars every year. They surely will be sending more, now that the Obama administration has wisely, if belatedly, granted temporary protected status to undocumented Haitians in the United States. Haitians in Canada proposed another excellent idea: government-paid leaves of absence to allow expatriates (employed in government or the private sector) to return and rebuild civil society in their place of birth.

In a country scarred by endemic corruption and waste, relief funds and projects need to be carefully monitored. Those who know Haiti well note that in the years before this latest disaster, civil order had already begun to take root. President René Prével is far more capable than his predecessors, although we wish he would be a lot more visible to his own people and a lot more assertive. Haiti needs strong and honest leadership.

Expert analysts like Jocelyn McCalla, a Haitian-American development consultant, noted an encouraging upswelling of political good will and common purpose after the devastating hurricanes of 2008. This, he says, helps explain why Haitians have endured these horrific weeks with relative calm.

It will take a lot of money, creativity, and vigilance and sustained commitment to rebuild Haiti — from Haitians and from the world. There are smart people thinking about how to do it. And that is a start.

Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebrations

Dear family,

At 9:00 AM on January 31st 27 people gathered to join us for our 25th anniversary celebration. On the main courtyard pillar we had attached the large wooden centering cross that Pierre salvaged a day before from the chapel ruins. On the top of the cross we had placed red roses. On the altar was the painting of the old man walking with the young child on a narrow mountain path. The painting reflection was from Isaiah 2:3---"He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in his paths".

Our worship celebration began with Michael giving a reflection of how the painting spoke to him---" I see the old man as the past 25 years of the St. Joseph Family. The child is our future. The past has weathered many storms which have taken a toll. Thus the old man walks with the support of a cane. I see the cane as prayer. The head of the man is covered with a hat that helps protect him from the sun and the rain. The hat that halos the head of the sage old man is faith. The man carries in his bag a red cloth. The red cloth is symbolic of love. The bag has no covering. It is open, just as the man is open to the moment. The red cloth is available for anyone to grab from the bag. His love is something he wants to share. The bag also represents providence. Perhaps the bag holds provisions for the journey. The man wears a blue shirt---the color of truth and a desire for heaven. The tree of plenty is on his left and a tree of emptiness is on his right. In times of abundance and in lean times the man continues to move forward, guiding, protecting and encouraging the child.

I see the child as the St. Joseph Family ---25 years young. The old man is God giving us wisdom, providing us with what we need, protecting us by wielding his walking stick when harm comes our way. God lets us see the red cloth so we know we are loved. The rest of what is in the bag is a mystery---blessings yet to be dispensed.

The comforting message in this painting is that we are not alone. Twenty-five years ago and every day since, God walks with us, empowering us to be our best, strengthening us with a keen awareness that we are loved, while challenging us to be undaunted trailblazers.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, ---Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. The St. Joseph Family are just such trailblazers".

Following Michael's reflection on the painting by Haitian artist A. Sanon, others shared their reflections. Then Walnes stood up and sang YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE. There were lots of tears shed while that song was sung.

The service proceeded with opening songs and a penitential rite. Then we honored and remembered Dieulifet, one of our graduates that was a superb dancer and who on the afternoon of the earthquake had been working with Didi on dance moves for BEAT IT. That afternoon Dieulifet was killed by the falling ceiling at the dance school he was taking classes at. ---The other life we remembered and honored was that of Ben Larson, a young Lutheran seminary student from the States who had been a guest in our home and who lost his life on the dance level of our home the day of the earthquake. Ben loved music and had composed many beautiful hymns. As part of the honoring of Dieulifet and Ben, who both loved music so much, we play the song, GRACE LIKE RAIN---which Dieulifet was originally supposed to have done a liturgical dance to for our anniversary. We imagined Ben singing and Dieulifet dancing to that song in heaven as we listened to it here on earth.

Walnes continued to lead our worship service, playing the drum for our group hymn singing. Our Scripture reading was from Micah 6:8---"What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Walnes gave the homily for that. Then Renee read her poem, WALK ON. Walnes then read it in Kreyol. My favorite line from that poem is: "The uncertainty of the road ahead is comforted by the knowledge of the challenges conquered so far."

After the reading of the poem we listened to the song, THE ROSE, while each person present placed a rose in a vase at the base of the altar. The individual roses were symbols of each person's love and their promise to

stay with this family and help it to blossom.

After Communion Walnes sang THE SUMMONS. We prayed the prayer of Abandonment and gave one another joyful hugs of peace.

The altar was then cleared and four delicious cakes were placed there. For our beverage we had cold water. Since the worship service was at the entrance courtyard to St. Joseph's where we always greeted guests with a glass of cold water. It seemed the perfect drink for the party. We give all who came to our home a glass of cold water as an outward acknowledgement that we see Christ in them---those who give a glass of water to the least of mankind give it to Christ.

Thank you for being the presence of Jesus in our lives and sharing in the joy of our 25th anniversary.

Peace and all that is good! ----Michael and "family"