

BROTHERS OF CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION



« *LAND OF HAITI,*

THOU SHALT RISE AGAIN »

My land, alloy of dreams and nightmares,
My land of brambles and diamonds,
My land of tears without end and of joys in torrents,
My land is dead with its song,
My land is dead once again.
My land,
Who will tell of your wound, your cross and your misfortune?

...

I have nevertheless dreamt of a promised land where the season

Of men is that of happiness,
I have dreamt of so many a thing:
Of the song of the springs from which life gushes out,
Of the dance of lilies on the cheeks of young ladies,
Of the starry sparks on our paths of solitude,
And of the resurrection of roses...

...

My land, thou my language,
Thou shalt rise again:
Thy fragile body bears a hope
Bigger than the world...

*Poem of Yves Patrick Augustin,
Read by Brother Jean-Eddy Augustin,
During the Requiem Mass for
Brother Joseph Bergot at Saint-Renan*

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Letter to the Mennaisian Family

Rome, 12th February 2010

Dear Brothers,
Dear Mennaisian Friends,

Last January, on the 12th, a very strong earthquake devastated the zone of Port-au-Prince, in Haiti. It was terrible! Immediately we started searching for whatever information available, especially concerning our Brothers and their schools. It was very difficult since the means of communication were impossible. Some Brothers of Haiti outside the capital were able to inform us, while they themselves were trying with difficulty to verify the information they were receiving.

Very quickly, we realised the disaster which had hit this country that we love. The trial of this people then appeared to us so great, so heavy. Then, we were shocked at the death announcement of our two Brothers, Joseph and Dominic. Their house collapsed on them, and their two confreres, Fernand and Jules who, wounded, are actually undergoing treatment in Canada.

I would like to address myself to the families of our deceased Brothers and tell them how very close we are to them and that with them, we are praying for Joseph and Dominic. I thank them for the testimony of their friendship and of their faith when they learnt of the death of their sons, of their brother or of their uncle. I also thank all those who, in one way or another, in Haiti as well as in France, tried to help them or finally intervened to remove the body of Brother Dominic from the rubble of La Mennais House. Our two Brothers gave themselves passionately to the education of the Haitian youths whom they loved so much. According to their wish, they were buried in this beloved land.

By this letter I address myself also to the Brothers who are in Haiti, to those who are currently studying in France or at Abidjan, to the teaching and non-teaching Staffs of our schools, to all the youths of these schools, to the Postulants and to the Haitian Novices, to tell them how much the entire Congregation have associated themselves to their pain, but also to their faith and to their hope. We have particularly thought of those of our Brothers who, anxious about their neighbours, could possibly join them. We assure with our prayer those who, among them, lost their loved one. Their testimony of faith and their fortitude in the time of trial were a powerful call to us to walk with them and to bring them the support they need.

Little by little, we have been able to measure the extent of the catastrophe which hit Haiti. Without counting the innumerable destructions of all sorts of buildings, it is estimated that more than 200.000 people died and more than 1.5 million were made homeless. Many youth and children, as well as their teachers were buried under the walls of their schools. The Church herself has suffered a lot in her members and in her churches.

In our schools also, we deplore some victims: six deaths at Jean Marie Guilloux School. These were three group employees, the lady in-charge of the Bar, one of her assistants, and the son of the watchman, a boy aged 13; two or three Primary pupils and some forty students of the Teacher Training College at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague School (Rue du Centre).

The destructions are very numerous, the humanitarian needs of many a family are enormous. The Brothers, at the site, are doing their level best to help and prepare for the reconstruction. Fatigue is felt, but each one draws strength from the will to permit the children and the youth to resume schooling as soon as possible. If we want to rebuild, the first urgency is that of persons, and among these, the children and the youth have the priority, and therefore the schools to receive them.

«Under the emergency tents; things are not all that rosy! But, in the free spaces of the courtyard, the children are not bored, and the youths find where to play basketball or football, in an easy-going environment. Triumph of life » (F. Dufreine Auguste, Provincial d'Haïti)

In the first place, everything possible was done to receive the stricken population. A hospital of the 'Médecins sans frontières' was installed at Saint Louis de Gonzague Institution, and many canvas tents, as on the compound of the Juniorate, made it possible to receive very many families. At present, it is necessary to give priority to the school.

Brother Provincial, assisted by his Brothers, increases contacts and meetings with the different people responsible for the Administration, the Church, the Conference of religious men and women, to study what can be done.

In order that « life triumphs » we want to mobilise ourselves also.

Therefore, here are some precisions on the way we could organise ourselves. Of course, we do not yet have all the elements. Here, it is a question of launching an operation which, in any case, is bound to last several years, given the enormity of the task.

1. During the forthcoming month of March, I will go to Haiti, accompanied by Brother Louis Balanant, the Treasurer General. This journey will permit us to tell our Brothers all our fraternal solidarity. It will give us also an opportunity of understanding better, together with them, the way we must take together in view of rebuilding what was destroyed.
2. Many persons, schools, and different associations, have already sent gifts to the NGO of the Congregation (ASSIFIC, SAL, TERRES SANS FRONTIERES). These will study, with the Brothers of Haiti, how they can give tangible aid.
3. Brother Louis Balanant, Treasurer General, is the official guarantor of the Congregation for the reconstruction aid. The NGO's will therefore work in liaison with him, and questions about how aid could be sent from any sector of the Congregation should be addressed to him.
4. Brother Ernst Viel is, on his part, the guarantor for the Brothers of Haiti, the one with whom Brother Louis Balanant and the NGO's should work closely to deliver the aid.
5. We can contact them on the following e-mail address: economat@lamennais.org.
Thank you also for following up the information, which will be posted regularly on the Internet Site of the Congregation : www.lamennais.org.

The needs are immense. Therefore, I invite all those men and women who want to make their contribution to do it with generosity. They can also arouse the participation of other persons around them.

« Land of Haiti, thou shalt rise again! ». The work to be accomplished is immense. We do not envisage it without addressing ourselves to the Author of life. In spite of the incommensurable task before them, the Haitian people will rise up again. On the ruins of the earthquake, they want to build a society of peace, of justice and of reconciliation. We want it together with them, in the certitude that God will be the first builder of this future. An intense prayer rises from our heart to God in order that his Kingdom come in Haiti.

To mean it, every 12th day of each month during this year, we shall remember to pray for our Brothers of Haiti as well as for the teachers and pupils of their schools.

The season of Lent, which we are entering, is also an occasion of offering our tangible contribution towards the construction of a just society « where all receive what is necessary in order to live according to their human dignity and where justice is enlivened by love » (Benedict XVI).

May our Lady of Perpetual Help sustain her children who put all their trust in her.



Brother Yannick Houssay, s.g.