

## Haiti Earthquake Update (As of Feb. 4, 2010)

### The Little Sisters of St. Therese of Riviere Froid

Since 1992, IHMs from Monroe, Scranton, and Immaculata, Pennsylvania together with the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore, have stood in solidarity with the poor of Haiti in their struggle for dignity, life and human rights. Since 1995 the sisters have twinned with an indigenous congregation of religious women, the Little Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus, located in Riviere Froide, Haiti. Rivere Froide is two miles south of Carrefour, a shantytown, which was the epicenter of the Earthquake. It is about 20 miles south of Port au Prince.

In the earthquake the Little Sisters lost four sisters and their motherhouse, a guest house, and approximately 200 children are still buried beneath the collapse of their school on the same property. The sisters, using nothing but their hands pulled 25 injured children and 30 bodies from the rubble.

*(Update from Eileen Coleman, IHM - Feb. 1, 2010)*

I spoke with Sr. Bernadette and she wanted me to thank you all for your prayers, your support and your concern. "We feel it" she said. As you can imagine, life and living is very difficult for them and the rest of the Haitian people, especially the peasants.

The Little Sisters lost 9 missions, 3 churches, 5 schools, 10 hospitals, 8 convents, 1 house and school for the handicapped

They lost 4 sisters: Sr. Maya Joseph - age 64, Sr. Irene Baptiste - age 74, Sr. Jacqueline Pierre - age 67 and Sr. Lucita Jean age - 62

The principal of the afternoon school, a laywoman and 3 lay teachers were killed along with the children. Four young women who live and work with the sisters also died. Several of the sisters were pulled from the rubble, including Sr. Denise, and seem to be ok. Sr. Bernadette was not at Riviere Froide when the quake occurred – it took her until the next day to get there. Sr. Jeanne was near the airport and walked through Port au Prince to Riviere Froide, arriving there well after 11 pm, a journey through the rubble of over 6 hours. The sisters and the peasants worked through the night and next day digging through the rubble with their hands, trying to pull the children, sisters and lay teachers out from the pan caked buildings. Doors were used first to carry the injured, then the dead and were finally used to make coffins. They buried the children next to their chapel which remains standing but has huge structural cracks throughout the foundation, walls and ceiling. The sisters were buried in their cemetery near the motherhouse. Haitians bury the dead above ground so they had to try to recover some of the blocks from the collapsed buildings in order to make their coffins. The peasants don't have the word "earthquake" in their working vocabulary so they are having a hard time understanding what has happened.

They continue to be in desperate need of food, water and other supplies. They have tried to contact various aid groups, Catholic Relief Services etc. but no help has come yet. While they are overwhelmed by their losses they are continue to live in the hope of being able to rebuild some of the missions that they lost, starting with Riviere Froide. Let us continue to support them, pray for them and for all of the people of Haiti.

Click [here](#) for a video clip which includes a segment about the Little Sisters of St. Therese

Click [here](#) to link to an article in the Washington post about the school which collapsed.

*(Note: Joan Mumaw has brought the Little Sisters to the attention of Catholic Relief Services. They are working to check on their status and to provide aid.)*

### **Fonkoze**

Fonkoze, Haiti's Alternative Bank for the Poor, has lost its main operational base in Port au Prince and five of its staff members. 750 other staff are scattered throughout the country and are attempting to ensure that members are able to receive transfers of funds from outside the country as well as money to operate their small businesses. This enterprise which is supported by IHM Sisters and many other religious congregations, suffered greatly in the most recent hurricane, but bounced back with support of American religious. It has been an effective means of growing small businesses through micro loans, especially to poor women.

Click [here](#) for a hopeful article on How Fonkoze is helping with relief efforts.

For a detailed update go to Fonkoze's Earthquake News Page at <http://www.fonkoze.org/innews/earthquakenews.html>

### **St. Francis DeSales Hospital in Port-au-Prince**

*(From Juliana, Casey, IHM)*

The hospital was 70% destroyed. Ten people were killed. The Director and Chief Medical Officer survived and the hospital has been providing emergency care and hopes to open their surgery unit within a few days. The Hospice St. Joseph, where our teams always stayed and where some IHMs have stayed, was destroyed. No one was killed there and they do have supplies and are treating people in the area. We will be sending teams of volunteers, especially clinicians, very soon – as soon as we can get flight clearance. The clinic/orphanage/maternity that we also worked with was destroyed, and 3 were killed there. The tragedy that is Haiti is an open wound on our humanity. At least now, people can see the wound we were trying to put band-aids on.

Click [here](#) for a recent article (Feb. 2) on St. Francis DeSales Hospital in the aftermath of the quake.

### **Fondwa/University of Fondwa**

IHM Sisters in Monroe have actively supported the development of the small University of Fondwa in the mountains southwest of the capital. The River Raisin Institute and Monroe County Community College also assisted in erecting solar panels to power computers for distance learning for students at the college which focuses on business administration, veterinary medicine and agriculture. There has been a total collapse of the buildings at Fondwa. Loss of life appears to have been minimal at the university, but at least 30 persons have died in the local community. Most of the population of Fondwa is living in the streets

Genese Saintilus, the IHM sponsored student who graduated from the University of Fondwa this past June, survived the earthquake along with her parents. However, Genese lost two of her cousins. The small store that she set up in Leogane upon graduating from UNIF was completely demolished.

Below is a photo of the University of Fondwa after the earthquake



The following photos are of the Sisters of St. Antoine, a women's religious community in Fondwa. The Sisters are responsible for over 50 kids from the orphanage which collapsed as well as their own community. As one sister put it, they are "living in the trees" and are having trouble coping with the trauma and their sense of isolation and abandonment.





Rich Gosser of Partners in Progress has been working to bring the needs of Fondwa and the Sisters of St. Antoine to the attention of the international relief agencies that are in Haiti, As of Jan. 31, a representative of Catholic Relief Services reported initial aid has been delivered to Fondwa.

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*IHM Sisters are committed to assisting these ministries and with the help of others will work with the Haitian people to rebuild their communities and their lives. Those wishing to help support this work can send contributions of IHM Sisters, 610 W Elm, Monroe Michigan 48162. Checks can be made out to IHM Sisters with a note indicating it is for Haiti Relief*