

building hope

Family of Four Parishes Lent 2019

Week 3 Reflection

I have been blessed to have a relationship with an organization in Haiti where I have been visiting for over twenty years. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and has dealt with many issues since gaining its independence in 1804.

When I take groups to visit Haiti, one of the biggest concerns I face is to get people to just experience the people and the culture and to not spend all their time trying to fix the country. I admit, on my first trips to Haiti I did the same thing. It seemed so obvious what was wrong, and I thought if they just did this or that, things would be so much better. Haiti's problems run deep and are tied to many things which cannot be fixed in a few weeks or years.

What I have come to realize, and I try to get others to see, is how much Haiti has to share with us all. They have such a tremendous sense of community, love of God, genuine hospitality, and gratitude for all that is good. There is a great and simple wisdom in the Haitian people that seems to me to be very close to God.

In today's gospel, people were approaching Jesus with their mixed-up beliefs about who must have sinned because they suffered and died. Much like the people I take to Haiti, they were confused and were trying to justify in their own minds why these people died. Jesus told them that what these events are telling them is to repent, not to judge. We need to focus on what we are doing in our own lives because we are all headed for death. We do have a chance to be saved though, if we just try to do good and trust in God.

Jesus tells us the parable of the fig tree not producing fruit and the owner wants to pull it out. The gardener asks for a chance to help it grow.

I have a friend in Haiti, Jean Marie, that works at the house where I stay when I visit. He does many jobs around the house including caring for all the beautiful florae that are planted everywhere. I asked him once how he makes everything grow so well. Jean Marie just smiled and said "I provide a sunny place, water, and fertilizer then Bondye (God) does the rest. Bondye bon (The good God)!"

During this Lenten Season, I think we are all challenged to be more aware of our own mortality and focused on repenting and saving ourselves. How do we do that? By being less judgmental and more compassionate.

We need to reflect on what we are doing for ourselves and others:

Are we being a sunny place (bringing light)?

Are we providing water (refreshment)?

Are we being fertilizer (sustenance)?

Are we trusting in God (Bondye bon)?

-Ralph Stewart, Director of East Side Child & Youth Ministry

DEDRA

FUTURE HOMEOWNER



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

Looking back on her childhood, Dedra admires her parents for owning their own home and providing a stable place for her to grow up. She recalls her father being the resident handy man, always fixing things in the house.

“If he was fixing the sink, I would get under there with him,” says Dedra. “He taught me a lot.”

To this day Dedra credits her father for teaching her the skills to maintain a home or fix up a car. Now with a son of her own, Dedra is hoping to provide a similar environment. She wants to teach her son, Carson, the value of home and how to take care it.

Currently, Dedra and Carson are renting a duplex on North 16th Street. She says the neighbors are noisy and always leaving trash everywhere.

Dedra says she feels like sometimes she’s cleaning up after the whole block.

She can’t wait to have a space of her own that she can maintain and build upon. In fact, Dedra dreams of finishing their future basement and possibly building a garage where she could work on cars. She’s currently helping her father rebuild a 68’ Dodge Charger.

When exploring the potential for a home of her own, she found traditional homeownership wasn’t even an option. That’s when she discovered Habitat for Humanity.

“What I like about Habitat is that you’re not living above your means,” says Dedra. “I’ll still be able to save for the future.”

**every
one**

**of us deserves a
decent and affordable
place to call home.**