

One week later, the earthquake and signs of the Holy Ghost

Dear friends,

Our strategy is well underway, in collaboration with local authorities (State or Church or both), and is four-fold:

1. Our medical team is working daily with the people at the various tragic sites, with their base at Port Salut,
2. St Luc Hospital (among other hospitals) is receiving some medically evaluated patients,
3. We are sending loads of supplies daily to our emergency medical team, to other St Luc clinics in the affected areas as they restart their function, and to hospitals and clinics in Jeremie and Les Cayes, as we receive requests,
4. We are starting to put a solid roof over peoples' heads.

This is all in progress.

We have some roofing activity starting in Randel, Morne Blanche (Nippes) and Aquin, but on a larger scale the St Luke leaders have practical plans for roofing for all affected St Luke staff, and families of school children, in the hard hit areas along the fault line. This may call for as many as 600 roofs. We are trying to avoid tarps and tents, and provide roof shelter that might be a first step to a new "house".

My own team and I just returned from our third trip to the south, delivering these loads of requested goods, and then going by motorcycle and by foot through muddy rivers, to visit communities and see where our teams are working and what more is needed.

On this trip we went to Jeremie, Maniche, Ranbo, Port Salut and Aquin.

We had a surprise on arriving to Jeremie late last night with a loaded truck: the suspension bridge into Jeremie, with 16 cables on each side that suspend it, had 3 broken cables on the

west side.

Also, since there are many places to buy scrap metal by the pound for export and recycling, someone with a huge wrench removed several the huge iron bolts where the cables originate.

Talk about being "penny wise and pound foolish." Weakening a feeble lifeline to the city for a few dollars.

Traffic had been crossing the bridge for all these days since the earthquake, but a heavy truck passing on the side of the three broken cables yesterday buckled the bridge, and put it in danger of collapse.

So the only crossing allowed, as we got there at 10pm, was by motorcycle and foot.

In any other country the bridge would be condemned. But to condemn that bridge totally right now would be to condemn Jeremie city and beyond. It's the only practical way in.

A new temporary dirt road will soon be cut further to the east, where traffic can drive through the river shallows, until a bridge can be built.

The scene at the bridge was phenomenal.

Food roasting on open fires, glowing on the dark street, rum flowing everywhere, overloaded motorcycles bobbing and weaving, bringing goods to the other side, clobbering foot passengers with their enormous cargo (including enough carbonated beverages to fill a lake , and tons of the ever present "cheese twists".)

There were men rolling 50 gallon drums of fuel over the bridge by hand, and thieves were not lacking. They are so good at their craft that they could steal the eyes out of your head.

I felt like I was in a scene from a movie about old time pirates at a Caribbean port town.

If, in your mind, you peel the thieves out of the scene, the human ingenuity and persistence is astounding and well worth imitating.

Instead of cheetos, we were crossing with high level intravenous antibiotics and ER/ICU medicines, syringes, IV fluids, oral medicines of all stripes, bandages and casting material, lidocaine and sutures.

Not sure how we would get our 400 boxes across the bridge, where Nebez already had a truck waiting for us on the other side, we settled on using three wheelbarrows and two motorcycles, instead of a "combit" by hand.

I had to surrender any hope of the boxes arriving to St Antoine Hospital right side up, uncrushed and unopened, as we had meticulously packed them.

We succeeded after 10 crossings, largely because in order to pack as many boxes as possible on a motorcycle, and not having large bags or sacks on hand for this unforeseen complication, we used body bags as sacks.

It is amazing how people ceded the way to us, owing to their doubt about the contents.

We got everything to St Antoine Hospital, Jeremie Ville, late last night.

It is more and more evident the earthquake is an off road/off radar emergency. It is not, like the last time, primarily a collapse of populated mega-centers. It means, as is evident if you visit, that there was more damage done by landslides and rolling boulders, to people who live and farm on high mountainsides, than to the cities.

Many of these landslides left scars on the sides of mountains, and became the burial ground for those taken under by the avalanche.

On the mountain pass at a place called "Fam pa dra" (a strange name meaning "women are not sheets"), we stopped to see what we once knew to be a high peak, look now like a

crater.

The farmers of the area came to us as we looked on, and we had a quiet prayer. They told us how many in the community were dead under the rubble, and about the 6 they were able to save.

These very poor people are community heroes. Their lives changed totally in only a minute of a quaking earth- they were horrified, stunned, and yet began a vigorous search and rescue for their neighbors.

Because the damage is not central in a city, help is characterized by long distance search and rescue, or in biblical language, by the work of the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep.

For believers, prayers for the dead recognize the passage of the soul from a life of flesh and blood to a life of light and grace, as the souls are made holy, by God's Holy Spirit.

We should all, each in our customary way, add to the prayers for the rite of passage of the souls of these people who died so tragically.

Sometimes there are messages from those who have crossed, to us on this side of the grave.

We just received a donation with many levels of meaning.

The father of Molly, a young vibrant woman who died when our former hospital collapsed in the 2010 earthquake, just sent what was left in Molly's personal account with this message: "Molly would want this to be of help to the Haitian people." When I read this, I was totally speechless.

For us and for countless others, this earthquake has reopened many painful memories of sadness and loss.

And yet, in such a tremendously motivating way, from across a decade and across the Great Divide, the will of Molly is made known and becomes a practical and inspiring help, compassion from victim to victim.

Only the great Heart of God makes this possible.

Please pray for those who are struggling and suffering, as well as for those who have died.

We so appreciate the strength of your prayer, and your sacrifices to help at this urgent moment.

Fr Rick Frechette CP,DO

August 21, 2021



<http://www.stlukehaiti.org/blog/2021/8/22/one-week-later-the-earthquake-and-signs-of-the-holy-ghost>



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