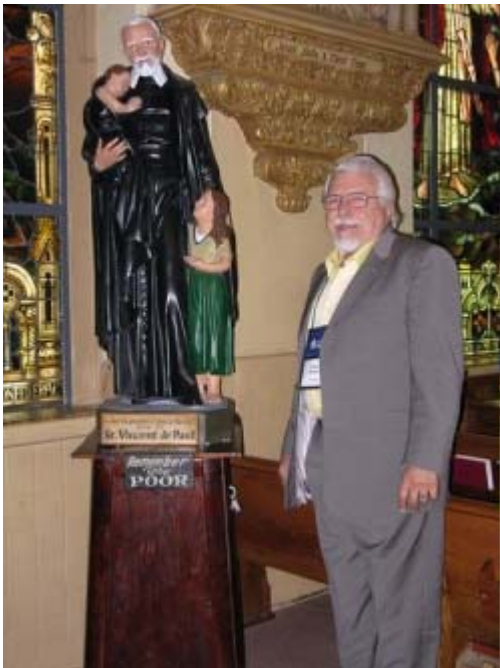




Maigré désas nou en, nou gade piedevan
(No matter what happened, we always look forward)



We had to wait for 200,000 dead and a destroyed country for the eyes of the World to turn to Haiti. Haiti is the occidental half of Quisqueya, the island Christopher Columbus called La Española, a onetime rich French colony.

In 1804 Haiti became the first free republic in Latin America, but as they came out of the French oppression, they had 700,000 slaves, about 85% of the total island population, with about 30,000 living in the eastern portion, today called Dominican Republic. France never forgave them, and of course, did not recognize the new government; just like many other countries in the western hemisphere that decided that the Haitians were not capable of self government because they were blacks. To be able to come out of the international economic isolation they faced, Haiti had to agree to pay 150 million Francs as

indemnification to France; a sum that at that time was well above its budget of 2 million Francs. This debt could not be paid until 1938 and caused the country to spiral deeper into debt. In 1915 Haiti was invaded by the United States after suffering under the dictatorship of 23 inept tyrants. Another point to consider, in the sad history of this country, is that they have had 42 presidents of which 29 have been assassinated and only 2 were lawfully elected. Many historians have said that: "when the Americans collected their monies and they left in 1934, Haiti was left in the hands of bloody and miserable dictators".

It is sad to remember that, before their French Revolt, Haiti was able to supply more than half of the World's coffee needs, as well as 40% of the sugar needed by France and Great Britain. But after 200 years, by the start of this century, after a long history of anarchy and exploitation, it is totally different; now the Caribbean country imports over 70% of its people's needs, the country is 98% deforested, and Haitians are not able to have any type of sustainable agricultural endeavor.

Just a few hours after the catastrophic earthquake, famous preachers were alluding that the lash of nature being caused by this country's practice of voodoo; a religion where pacts are made with the devil; and therefore they were being punished by God, a silly understanding, for the god of most religions of the World, does not punish anyone. I believe that voodoo is just a cultural manifestation, and that the tragic occurrence has nothing to do with the supernatural, especially when we are dealing with nature.

After putting together the facts that have situated this country in today's condition, it is clear that not the French, or the Americans, or any government during their



NATURAL DISASTERS

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independence years, or President René Preval could break the chain of disappointments brought about by men and nature.

Two years ago, Haiti's President since May 2006: Rene Preval, begged the World to undertake long term solutions for his country. He said that an instance of charity would not end the cycles of poverty and catastrophe. I remember that at that time our Radio Paz Conference, in cooperation with the National Catholic Radio Network Radio Paz, sent a container of food to our Haitian brothers, but.... we also committed the sin of forgetting what Preval had said.

We, I fact, discontinued the help from our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; although the Daughters of Charity have, for many years and with publicity, continued to send a couple of monthly shipments of food, clothing and medicines for the needy. If this had been done by the governments of the World, Haiti would be in a much better position today. Haiti could have weathered the quake better. But it is easier to shield ourselves behind: "poor people, they are the poorest country in the World"; and then forget the pain and hunger that these people were and are enduring.

After the 2008 hurricane, President Preval said these prophetic words: "Once that first wave of human compassion is finished, we will be abandoned, as always. We will be left alone to face new catastrophes, and to reinitiate, as if were a ritual, the same work of mobilization". It is sad to listen to a CNN reporter saying: "I didn't realize that you can count by the hundreds the number of children who go to bed without eating and die from malnutrition, while we spend millions in wars and superfluous expenditures".

Even though the World, at this moment tear its vestments, and swears over and over that they will never forget Haiti, the people are right in anticipating their abandonment. The only hope and cause of some optimism is the fact that, after the quake, Haiti simple does not exist. So we only have one alternative and duty: to rebuild this people; like we have done in the past with other countries. Not only should we send food and medicines, but do a full social and economic study to eliminate hunger and to teach these people the true way of integrity and self-government; that they have a right to be governed by decent politicians and not by corrupt politicians who enriched themselves by the hunger and blood of their citizens.

Remember, it is imperative that all of us contribute a little to the saving these people. It is time for their pain to end, and for us to remember that they are our brothers; and deserve, as all human beings do, a better life and progress.

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