

Rebuilding Haiti Through the Empowerment of Girls

Since our concern for Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, we have learned much about this small country. In past Lenten calendars, we have shared the facts and needs of the people. Now we know the names of the girls and their teachers. We have seen their pictures. They are no longer just someone in need, but we have a connection with 10 girls and have made a difference in their lives, as well as they in our own. We have come to know the people of Haiti as more than those living in the poorest country of the Western Hemisphere. We know them as our sisters and brothers with whom we share this vast world.



So this year the Haiti calendar is taking a new approach using the recent encyclical of Pope Francis *Fratelli Tutti* (FT) or *Fraternity and Social Friendship*. Each week of Lent 2021, you are invited to read and reflect on a quote from the encyclical. May this deepen your connection with Haiti and carry it beyond to all the people with whom we share this planet.

Donations can be sent payable to:
U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph
86-44 Edgerton Blvd
Jamaica Estates, NY 11432
Memo: Mission Haiti

Week One of Lent 2021

“Once more we are being reminded that each new generation must take up the struggles and attainments of past generations, while setting its sights even higher. This is the path! Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day. It is not possible to settle for what was achieved in the past and complacently enjoy it, as if we could somehow disregard the fact that many of our brothers and sisters still endure situations that cry out for our attention.”(FT#11)

Reflection

Sheidna, Rose, Taila, Tamara, Christerline, Nastacia, Slat, Ferlanda, Ferla, and Serena, the girls we are helping through school, are the new generation! How can we live our lives, use our voices and resources, and advocate for change to support what is expected of these students? We share the same experience of COVID-19 and political unrest. How can this help us relate more closely with them?

Week Two of Lent 2021

“True, a worldwide tragedy like COVID-19 momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. The storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered our false and superfluous certainties... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes has fallen away, revealing once more the blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another.” (FT #32)

Reflection

While we are in the “same boat” we find ourselves with more to keep us afloat than most people in Haiti, including our 10 girls and their families. How do I share what I have? Would that be financial aid, or sharing the reality of Haiti with others, or working with elected representatives to act with compassion for those who have come to our country seeking safety, employment, or education?

Week Three of Lent 2021

“Aside from the different ways that various countries responded to the COVID-19 crisis, their inability to work together became quite evident. For all our hyper-connectivity, we witnessed a fragmentation that made it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all. Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality.” (FT #7)

Reflection

Before the pandemic most of us lived in a rather secure world. We were relatively sure that we would have a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and food for our tables. Many are now facing a new reality. How do we use this experience to help us understand the reality of our friends in Haiti? How do we use that to change policies and connections with Third World countries so that our brothers and sisters can live with security?



Week Four of Lent 2021

“All too quickly, however, we forget the lessons of history, ‘the teacher of life’. Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, we will think no longer in terms of “them” and “those”, but only “us”. If only this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing. If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life.

If only we might rediscover once and for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth, with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls that we have erected.” (FT #35)

Reflection

Reflect on the experiences of the past year and the “life lessons” you are learning. How do these move you to include others, the girls, the people of Haiti, all of us on planet Earth? What value do you place on this and what might you be able to give for the girl-students education?

Week Five Lent 2021

“Despite dark clouds I would like to take up many new paths of hope. For God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. The recent pandemic enabled us to recognize and appreciate those around us

who in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. We began to realize that our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people valiantly shaping the decisive events of our



shared history; doctors, nurses, pharmacists, storekeepers, cleaning personnel, caretakers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety. They understood that no one is saved alone.”

(FT #54)

Reflection

Take time daily to be attentive to the “seeds of goodness blossoming” in you, and around you, in your family, friends, our world, and our country? What seeds of hope do you pray for our girl-students? How might you support that hope for them?

Week Six of Lent 2021

“I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold! It can look beyond personal conveniences, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon and it can open us up to great deals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile. Let us continue to advance along the paths of hope.” (FT #55)

Reflection

HOPE! Consider... “the blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are sisters and brothers of one another.” How do you want to advance the path of hope for the girl-students? How have you grown being part of this journey with our Haitian girl-students? How have the quotes of *Fratelli Tutti* broadened your sense of living in a global community? What difference does hope make in your life and the lives of those around you?

Thank You for sharing Lent 2021 with us and the people of Haiti. Your generosity has made education possible for the girl-students for the past eight years. This year marks year 9! It is said and proven to be true that educating girls gives them the freedom to make decisions to improve their lives and lift their family and country out of poverty.

With gratitude for your donation,
The Girl-Students
Sisters of St. Joseph of the U.S. and Canada

Sisters of St. Joseph 2021 Lenten Journey with Our Neighbors in Haiti



“Let us dream...as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of their beliefs and conviction, each of us with their voice, brothers and sisters, all.”

**Pope Francis
On Fraternity and Social Friendship**