

**A DEACON IN HAITI**  
**“Someone Forgot to Tell Me that God is Everywhere in Haiti!”**

*Reports from St. Jean Baptiste Parish*

LaValle, Haiti

By

**DEACON JIM McKENZIE**

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Diocese of Nashville

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*[Practically everything written below was written by Deacon Jim McKenzie while he was in Haiti. Now that he is home he is working on his posts, editing and adding, and he is adding personal reflections now has time for reflection on his experiences. Deacon Jim will make his larger document available later.]*

**BACKGROUND**

After days of gathering supplies and desperately searching for a way into Haiti and to the sister parish of the Cathedral of the Incarnation, St. Jean Baptiste in LaValle, Haiti, Deacon Jim McKenzie of the Cathedral, his son James McKenzie, and Erin Brunner finally left Tuesday, January 26, from Cornelia Fort Airpark in Nashville in a DC3 and arrived in Haiti on Thursday, January 28. Cathedral parishioners Tom Cigarran, Bill Carter, Deacon (Lt. Col) John Krenson, and James McKenzie were intimately involved in making this mission/emergency flight possible. In a week's time the Tennessee Governor, Senators, Congressman, and members of the U.S. Army were all contacted for their influence, help, and assistance. It was hoped that a C130 would be put at our disposal to carry to the people of LaValle 20,000 pounds of medical supplies, food, and tents that had been collected in just under the two weeks following the earthquake.

While a C130 was promised by the Governor, we still wait our turn. Though Deacon Jim, James, and Erin eventually made it to LaValle via a chartered plane (and eventually Bill Carter and another parishioner, Robb Anderson, in an additional flight), it is hoped that the C130 will still materialize so that additional and urgent medical supplies, food, tents and other needed items can be delivered to the people in LaValle as soon as possible.

In the first flight, Deacon Jim, James and Erin took with them critical medical supplies – mostly anesthesia items – and approximately 80 two and three person tents, and two large tents to be set up as operating rooms. Fr. Guy Dumond, the pastor of the St. Jean de Baptiste, met them in Jacmel in trucks and transported our missionaries and supplies up into the mountains to LaValle. In a charter flight a week later, Bill Carter and Robb Anderson took most of the rest of the supplies that had been gathered to LaValle. We had more supplies to send, but the next plane, a DC4, could not take everything we had to send.

During Deacon Jim's two week stay he functioned as a Catholic Deacon offering prayer, leading prayer, and comforting those he could despite the differences in our human languages—

there are no differences in the language of prayer! Being a nurse anesthetist for some 30 years, Deacon Jim also functioned in a critical medical role in a hospital that was desperate for help. Though a specialty nurse, he acted as physician, nurse practitioner, and anesthesiologist among other things. Occasionally he had to be a taskmaster urging others to do far more with far less than imaginable. Finally, Deacon Jim, as a cleric, offered himself simply as an ordained brother for the pastor of St. Jean Baptiste, Fr. Guy, a young pastor in an impossible situation, and given the tragic deaths of the Archbishop of Port au Prince, the Vicar General along with scores of other church personnel and virtually all the seminarians of the diocese, he was alone except for Deacon Jim.

Deacon Jim sent “posts” as regularly as he could to Fr. Ed Steiner, the rector and pastor of the Cathedral, and some other family and close friends to share with the Cathedral parishioners and all people of good will in the hope that in sharing his experiences everyone might vicariously experience the tragedy of Haiti, but more importantly, experience the deep and abiding faith in Christ that he found there. What Jim discovered in the ruins of buildings, at the funerals, in the hospitals, at prayer services, in food lines, and on the streets is the faith of Haitians who believe that “God is everywhere in Haiti.”

Included in this document are some of the private texts and emails between Deacon Jim, Fr. Ed, and Bill Carter only for the purpose of relaying the work, the frustration, and sometimes the humor involved in trying to live the message of Jesus to take care of the “widow and orphan.” These will be only a sampling of the literally hundreds of emails that were sent back and forth trying to secure transportation, understand the needs of Fr. Guy, and offer assistance to each other during these past four weeks - from the earthquake until today.

Deacon Jim left Haiti promising Father Guy that the Cathedral would not forget him and not abandon our fellow parishioners at St. Jean Baptiste. In discovering what Deacon Jim found in Haiti through his posts, I think Jim’s promise is one we intend to keep!

Deacon Jim usually wrote late at night when he was exhausted. Coherence was not always present. I have edited Jim’s posts only for clarity wishing to preserve his words as he sent them. He will have a chance to correct spellings and add details and correct details after some rest and reflection on his experience.

The date and times given for each of the posts and texts are the dates and times they were received by Fr. Ed.

May the mission continue!

*Very Rev. Edward F. Steiner*

Rector of the Cathedral and pastor of the Cathedral Parish

Brother Pastor of Rev. Guy Dumond

## The Mission

**Tuesday, January 26, 2010; 2:52 pm**

(Text messages from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed Steiner)

First take-off aborted. Too much weight. Almost ran off end of runway. Took food off. Trying again. Say a prayer....

**3:46 pm** Flying over Chattanooga!

**Wednesday, January 27, 2010; 8:16 am**

(Email)

As many of you know our initial take-off had to be aborted because the food simply weighed too much. Each box weighed 25 lbs each, and we ended up being way over loaded. We took off some of the weight and the second takeoff was perfect. The plane is cold, so I got in my sleeping bag for the ride which was really smooth.

I am so impressed with Russell our pilot. This man is salt of the earth, and I feel perfectly comfortable and safe with him. We flew to Ocala last night where the staff of the airport there met us on the tarmac just thrilled to see this plane. Pictures had to be taken with everybody and the plane. We re-fueled there and flew to Opaalocha close to Miami for the night. Finding a room was not easy because of the Pro-Bowl/Super Bowl madness here. Russell is at the FAA office right now getting our final authorizations to fly from here either to Kingston Jamaica or Santa Domingo to re-fuel then on to Jacmel. We are having some routine maintenance checks done on the plane this morning as well. We are thinking we will be in Jacmel around 3:00–4:00 pm Jacmel time. I will update again as soon as I can.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

**Thursday, January 28, 2010; 1:45 pm**

(email from wife of our pilot, Russell Brothers)

Russell made his passenger and supply drop in Jacmel and left back out to Puerto Plata to refuel to head home. He said the Canadians running Jacmel orderly and good shape. It was a short runway but safe in and out. He will take the same route back that he flew down. He will go to Exuma, then to Miami. Probably will overnight there, he's TIRED.

*[After leaving Exuma, one of the two engines of the plane Russell Brothers was flying quit. Past the point of no return, he made it to Miami without incident. The plane has remained in Haiti for*

*repairs. Everyone is grateful the mechanical emergency developed after Deacon Jim, James, Erin and the supplies were dropped off in Jacmel. With the weight on the plane, the flight would have met tragedy if the engine failure had occurred before dropoff. God has been given many thanks! – Fr. Ed]*

**Thursday, January 28, 2010; 3:23 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

I have arrived in LaValle. Some food is arriving. The problem is that the population has doubled and the fear is food is going to run out within a week. St. Jean Baptist Church is a major collection and distribution site. Nobody is sleeping indoors. The people are very afraid of aftershocks. The uneducated in the countryside believe Americans bombed the country. I can't get a clear assessment of water situation. I'm going to hospital next.

**Thursday, January 28, 2010; 4:33 pm**

(Text to Deacon Jim from Fr. Ed)

Just received email about church and food. Read to staff. Anxious to hear about the hospital. Glad you're there and okay. Convince the locals we didn't bomb them. Show the love! Have you had a bowel movement since the aborted takeoff?

**Friday, January 29, 2010; 8:59 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

We spent our first afternoon at the church assisting there. The village elders and aid organization representatives have set up a command station in the court yard of the church. The church is the major distribution center for aid for the community and the walled compound makes it ideal for this.

James and Erin spent the day filling plastic bags with corn meal and rice and helping the parish teenagers to make bags with basic food stuffs included.

I am in communication with an engineer who is doing initial assessments on buildings. Again no one is sleeping in the buildings including Fr. Guy because of the aftershocks and sheer terror of being a building when another earthquake comes.

I also had dinner with Dr Charles Renee [from New Orleans who is here], and I am presently in the hospital where people are lined up outside for care. There is an emergency room

physician here from Doctors-Without-Borders. Dr. Charles Renee, his wife who is an OB nurse and I are staffing this hospital. The patients are sleeping outside in tents because they are too afraid to be in the hospital building. We will begin triaging the 100 or so patients waiting outside as soon as our translator gets here.

Here is my assessment so far:

1. The village elders and Fr. Guy say that food is coming in right now but the population of the area has doubled, and there is no housing for them. [The tents we brought] were worth all of our efforts to get here. They do not see any let up in the amount of people coming to LaValle.
2. The big fear of the elders is that they are feeding LaValle from the donations from the aid organizations and that this is not in any way a guaranteed food supply line. They fear this food will run out within a few days. All of the food we have gathered in Nashville is needed no doubt. This food will not ever be a not needed supply as the people are streaming into LaValle and the elders do not see them going back into the countryside or the urban areas hit so badly by the earthquake.
3. They are so afraid to let the children go back into the schools. Fr. Guy is arranging for me to do a visual inspection of the schools myself as soon as I can get a break from the hospital. The children themselves are terrified of being in the school building as well. I cannot stress enough the affect this fear is having on the people. It would not be reasonable to send these children into these buildings right now even if they were in perfect shape. The elders are trying to decide when and how to get the children back in school as the diversion itself would be so healing for them. They are also trying to get simple things like soccer games going again so the children can think of something else besides the earthquake. Fr. Guy, the engineer here, the elders, and I all agree that the short term solution is to begin to set up tent classrooms as soon as possible. If the Cathedral group can get there hands on army size, reception size, big tents that can hold 30-40 students in desk, I think they could begin to plan on how to get the children back in school. You cannot get too many of these as the need is greater than the C130 would be able to handle weight wise along with the food. I can assess the total need for tents when I tour the schools.
4. Personal hygiene items, mainly soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes, seem to be a huge need.
5. Blankets: One of the villagers told us yesterday that white people do not get cold like black people so even though the evening weather is pleasant to us they need blankets.

I will send more as I continue to assess. I need to get back to work here.

God Bless,

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

**Friday, January 29, 2010; 1:02 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

It is 1:45 pm in LaValle and the medical staff just had to stop for a lunch break. I am counting 40 patients waiting to be seen when we return and of course will most probably be more by then. We saw so many patients this morning I can't begin to even describe the bedlam.

Dr. Charles is running his regular OB clinic, so the Emergency Room physician from "Doctors without Borders" has been seeing the sick and injured that have been flowing in here all day.

There is an elderly lady [for whom] I started an IV and gave her some narcotics just to get her comfortable from her extreme abdominal pain and diarrhea. The doctor and I both suspect this patient either has cholera or giardia [*Giardiasis is an infection of the small intestine caused by a microscopic organism.*]. A teenage boy has meningitis, and we can't get the mother to understand that the IV is [safe] and is necessary for him [in order] to receive the IV antibiotics that he needs. I put a catheter in a 16 year old boy who tells the translator he has not been able to urinate properly since the earthquake and for the last two days not at all. We are treating him for a urinary tract infection but cannot begin to treat the emotional trauma that probably started this whole process to begin with. We had to set up another tent outside to put a woman who has malaria in. These are just a few of the people we have seen today, and the day is only half done.

James has been fixing medical equipment at the hospital all day including the only washing machine we have for linens. Erin has been put in charge of organizing the pre-op and recovery area with the supplies.

We are having lunch at the church with Father Guy. I am so worried about him. He is under an unbelievable amount of stress because everyone comes to him for aid and assistance. He is having what I can only describe as panic attacks at night when he finally stops for bed, and I have given him some medication to help with that. He is such a young pastor to have this much stress and pressure on him. Please keep him in your prayers.

The tents are gone and we can see them dotting the mountainside as the people are setting up homes in them. More tents to live in would be especially helpful if my friends at the Cathedral could possibly arrange more to be on the next flight.

Being with these people who all are trying their best to be happy in this situation is like standing next to Jesus himself. It is an incredibly humbling and holy experience for me. I will keep in touch and please keep working. Don't listen to the news to judge the need here. The help is not here at this place. They cannot possibly know this.

God bless all of you for your prayers and help,  
*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

*[Deacon Jim texted Fr. Ed informing him that Internet service at the church had been turned off because, according to the company, the time that had been prepaid had expired. The company wanted more money. The Cathedral parish pays for Fr. Guy's Internet service so that the parish can keep in touch with him and he can keep in touch with his diocese and others. Lori Reddick investigated and discovered that the bill had been paid through February. It took days but it was discovered that we pay the bill to a Haitian subsidiary of an American company. Somehow a second subsidiary is also involved. Both subsidiaries were taking huge fees from our payment before sending the money on to the American company. It was not ethical and maybe not legal, but this is Haiti. The Internet is the only communication available and thus it is essential that it be functional. The service was restored, but even today the saga continues with money going all the wrong places and service being undependable as a result. The following texts and emails only give a hint at how hard it to get things accomplished in Haiti following the earthquake and not having adequate government or help services. – Fr. Ed]*

**Friday, January 28, 2010; 1:02 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(text message to Fr. Ed)

Fr. Guy's Internet has been shut off because the company in Port au Prince that he paid the bill through took a big cut of the payment. He thought he had paid for a year that would be up at the end of February, but they cut him off three days ago. I have reviewed the receipts and I am sure that is what happened.

The command center and all of his communication is dependant on the Internet. I have forwarded the information for paying it by credit card to Bill Carter who in turn emailed it to Lori. I doubt Lori will even see the email until Monday. I am cutting and pasting the email I sent to Bill below that has all of the account information. If his bill could be paid up - I am thinking it is only \$166.00 - plus whatever they ask for in advance will open a critical part of the information network here. All of the aid agencies down in Jacmel are communicating by Internet. Would you see what you can do so he can get Internet service back as soon as possible?

Also I am assisting at Mass tomorrow and I expect there will be 1000 people at Mass. If you could write a message either from the bishop or you to the people of St. Jean de Baptist I think it would mean the world to these people right now. If you could have Suzanne LaFond translate it into French. I will be able to give to Father Guy to read to the people at Mass tomorrow. Sorry to put you to work but I think both of these things are really important.

Thanks,  
*Jim*

**Saturday, January 30, 2010; 10:24 a.m.**  
**LaValle, Haiti**  
(Email)

Friday Evening Post:

Well it is 5:00pm and we just saw our last patient. Working with Dr. Richard from Doctors without Borders was an amazing experience. Our after lunch the patients were not nearly as sick as the morning patients and so Dr. Richard, a translator, and I were able to see another 50 patients in 4 hours. Every patient is suffering from stress, anxiety and Post Traumatic Stress.

Our last patient this evening is a nursing student, the only one to survive in her class of nursing students, and she is still experiencing pretty severe headaches and back pain from the head injury she sustained in the earthquake. But it is clear, like with all of the patients, her physical symptoms are only a small part of the problem that nights of no rest and severe anxiety are causing. She cries when she tells us how guilty she feels that she lived and all of her friends are dead. I tell her that what she is feeling is perfectly normal and it is okay to feel as bad as she does. Giving her permission to suffer this extreme trauma on a mental level seems to give her some peace. I tell her that her suffering is not over but it is okay and promised her that every day would be just a little bit better than the day before. She smiled and said, "Merci," but I am thinking, "Oh no! Thank you, my dear girl."

James fixed the only washing machine in the hospital, an xray machine, two exam lights, and the solar panels on the roof which had not worked in months. Erin spent the day with Sandra, Dr. Renee's wife, reorganizing the holding recovery area. This work turns out to be immensely helpful to Dr. Renee and his staff. I realize at the end of this day that I am the only person in this entire hospital that can even give an injection. How can this be???

It has been one busy day and I am exhausted beyond words but have never felt more satisfied in my role as a health care professional or deacon in the church. God is good. Good night my friends. I will write more tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

**Saturday, January 30, 2010; 2:27 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Saturday Post

Today is another beautiful day weather-wise in Haiti, and this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive day with no aftershocks. The people are convinced that I am bringing them this good fortune.

Dr. Richard, Dr. Renee, and I went to the hospital this morning to make rounds on the critically sick that are there in tents outside of the hospital. I have sent pictures to Rick Musacchio I made with my phone that show what in the U.S. would be the critical care unit. The fear is too great to keep the patients in the hospital building itself so they are in tents in front of the hospital.

Our patients that are here have meningitis, HIV, tuberculosis, Giardia with severe abdominal pain, and malaria. There is a fifth patient that I have not been involved with because it is an OB patient of Dr. Renee's. [These people] are all part of the expanding population [coming in] from the countryside and Port au Prince. I had to give IV antibiotics and oral meds to all of these patients and help Dr. Richard in assessing their progress. Miraculously they seem to be doing slightly better than yesterday.

The hospital is closed to new patients today, and the people of the villages know that so we do get a break [today]. Just as we were about to leave, though, a lady came to the hospital in labor with pre-eclampsia, so we have called in a village "matron," what we would call a country midwife, to stay with her. We are trying to treat her pre-eclampsia and will be here for the delivery.

Dr. Renee is so concerned that so many OB patients came to his OB clinic yesterday because there are no Nurse Practitioner level midwives that can staff the hospital once he is gone. Know any midwives that don't have anything to do for a couple of months????

I took a break and went to have lunch back at the church with Father Guy. He told me he spent his morning trying to convince the protestant pastor here to stop telling the people the earthquake was a result of their sinfulness and if they do not turn themselves more over to God another will come. In the U.S. we know when this nonsense is being told to people in the name of God that is what it is, nonsense. But here they have no frame of reference for an earthquake, so whatever someone in authority tells them about it they believe.

Fr. Guy asked the protestant pastor about our shared Christian theology about our God being loving and merciful. By his frustration I don't think he got far.

James and Erin went to one of the chapels/villages today and took really great pictures, and then came to the hospital to continue working on organizational and maintenance issues. We are all going with Dr. Renee after this baby comes to see a new lake that was formed by the earthquake somewhere close to here.

Tomorrow I will assist at Mass with Father Guy Dummond where I will deliver a message from Bishop Choby, the people of the Cathedral, and the people of Nashville. I am hoping my good friend Suzanne LaFond will be able to translate the message into French so that Fr. Guy can read it to the people in Creole at Mass. Hearing from the Bishop means a lot to these people because they currently have no bishop for the diocese of Jacmel and the archbishop in Port au Prince was crushed and killed in the earthquake.

I hope to visit the schools after Mass tomorrow.

I have also discovered the reason Fr. Guy does not have Internet any longer is that the company in Port au Prince that paid the company in the US for his satellite service took a huge cut of his money. He thought he had paid for Internet service for a year which would be through February, but they cut him off the day the money paid by the company in Port au Prince ran out. After combing through his receipts I discovered that is what happened. I have written to Father Steiner, Bill Carter and Lori Reddick at the Cathedral to try to pay the bill from the U.S. and hopefully re-establish Internet service.

As I wrote in an earlier post the command center for the elders of the community and the aid relief organizations is set up under tarps in the courtyard of the church. Now, that communication line has been cut.

That is all for now my friends, I will write again later. Thank you for your prayers.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

**Sunday, January 31, 2010; 11:06 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Text message to Fr. Ed from Deacon Jim)

Do you have Internet service? Did you get my email yesterday about the Internet being down at the church? I hear lots of snow and ice in Nashville.

*Jim*

**Sunday, January 31, 2010; 1:13 p.m.**

**Nashville**

(Text message to Deacon Jim from Fr. Ed)

Lori and I got your email but no billing info was included. Lori has info at office. Will wire payment Monday a.m. 4-5 inches of snow with ice. City shut down Fri-Sat. 90 people at 5:30 Mass. Only slightly better this a.m.

Parishioner brought 200 toothbrushes yesterday after reading one of your reports.

What do we need to collect to top off C-130?

**Monday, February 01, 2010; 8:59 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Text from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed)

Only Internet now is my phone. 100 more patients waiting to be seen. *Final* food distribution under way at church.

**Monday, February 1, 2010; 9:49 a.m.**

**Nashville**

(Text from Fr. Ed to Deacon Jim)

Jim: We need Internet bill info. We did not receive attachment.

*[More texts were exchanged. Lori made many, many calls. There is still much to discover about who is taking money and not fully paying bill, but the Internet is back up.]*

**Monday, February 1, 2010; 1:19 p.m.**

**Nashville**

(Text from Fr. Ed to Deacon Jim)

Did Fr. Guy find his family?

**Monday, February 1, 2010; 1:41 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Text from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed)

Yes, his mother and grandmother, and I think a sister, are all OK in Port au Prince. Thank for paying bill for church Internet. Hopefully it will back on today.

Internet down in hospital now, but not our responsibility.

**Monday, February 1, 2010; 2:22 p.m.**

**Nashville**

(Text from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed)

The church still has no Internet....typing on this damn phone is awful!

*[More texts were exchanged. Lori made many, many calls to companies in the U.S. and abroad. Bill Carter spoke with Deacon Jim by phone about the problem. There is still much to discover*

*about who is taking money and not fully paying the bill, but the Internet is finally restored...for now. – Fr. Ed]*

**Tuesday, February 02, 2010; 8:59 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Sunday Post

This morning I woke up early and walked from the hotel to St. Jean de Baptiste Church to assist Father Guy with Sunday Mass. I decided since I was a little early to stop at the hospital and check on the critically ill patients that are in tents in front of the hospital building. They all seemed to be better except for one young man who was being treated by a Haitian doctor that is paid by the government. These doctors do so little work that I did not even know they existed. On Friday, when we were so swamped with patients, Dr. Richard asked them to help see patients and they refused. They said they had administrative work to do. Yesterday during rounds I took this man's vital signs, and even though his blood pressure and pulse were good, I noticed he was in respiratory arrest. This morning soon after I arrived at the hospital there came a wailing like I have never heard before, and sure enough the young man had died. I was wearing my collar because I was on my way to church so I got into the small tent with the family and said the prayers of the dead in English. Even though they did not understand a word of English, I knew they understood. All this before Mass!

Mass was a beautiful experience. The singing was that kind of singing that you know is coming from the soul when you hear it. I was warmly introduced by Father Guy at the beginning of Mass, and I asked Father Guy to tell the parishioners that the Cathedral parish was their sister parish, and so we are your brothers and sisters and we will not forget you. I also told them that Bishop Choby sends his greetings and special blessings. They were so appreciative. There were over 1,000 people at Mass and many stood in the doorways or outside the church all together for fear the church would fall in due to the earthquake damage, especially if there was another tremor or aftershock. Still, while there were at least 850 in the church none of them would go to the three balconies for Mass. It was just too far from the exits of which there were 8, and believe me, I counted!

After Mass, Father Guy called a meeting in the church courtyard of the village elders and the committee organizing all the relief work in LaValle. The meeting was called so that they could tell me what the direst needs are in the hope that we will soon be sending this help. In attendance were the Mayor of LaValle, the Congressman from the central government, the civil engineer from LaValle, representatives of the 20 regions that make up LaValle, the members of the community relief committee, Fr. Guy, my translator, and me.

The meeting was started with a prayer and a report of the region of LaVout was made. Thanks to the translator that was provided for me I was able to fully participate in this meeting.

The report from the region of LaVout was that the school is damaged and needs to be assessed by the engineer. 300 homes in that region are destroyed, and many more people are still streaming in from the countryside and Port au Prince. It was explained to me that if someone had a relative or a friend in LaValle they would come from Port au Prince, bring their entire family with them, and maybe a neighbor as well. There is a huge concern about how to feed the influx of people. No one seems to know quite how many people may end up in the LaValle area before the hurricane season begins.

The next item on the agenda was the distribution of food that was to take place tomorrow. After assessing the regions they made the decision that only the elderly and women who were pregnant would be eligible for the food distribution, and this is the same criteria that had been used with tents. I didn't realize until later in the meeting how woefully inadequate this distribution is.

The next item on the agenda was one that I had asked for. As per Tom Cigarran, Bill Carter, and Fr. Steiner's request, I asked the committee members to please give me a priority of their most immediate and pressing needs. First is food. Certainly all of the 16,000 lbs we have ready to put on a C130 is needed and urgently. I asked the committee how much food was on hand to distribute and when would it run out. I was told that with the distribution tomorrow it would all be gone and that was only being given to the elderly and pregnant women. They could not stress enough how urgent this food is. They estimated that all food sources, locally, in the market, aid relief, all of it was enough to feed the people for 3 more days. This made me literally sick in the pit of my stomach, because I realized they were all looking for me alleviate what was soon to become another catastrophe. I asked if Catholic Relief Services had been here since the earthquake and they told me, no, they had not. My heart sank. I explained to all present in the meeting what was going on with the snow and ice in Nashville and that was a big cause for the delay. They all expressed their concern for the people in Nashville going through a snow storm. I thanked them for their concern and assured them that within a week Nashville would never know it had a storm.

Then they reported the next priority is still tents. The representatives from the 20 regions of LaValle reported that they had 4,000 people still without homes and that tents were desperately needed. Of those 4,000 there are a number of them who are sleeping outside not because of total destruction of their home but because of partial damage to their homes which they felt would fall on them if they slept inside. The other need is large tents. In one of the schools one child got crushed by falling debris, and now none of the children will go into the school even though the school received little damage. There is an entire subcommittee that is working on the psychological effects of the earthquake, and they are suggesting that the children be allowed to set up classrooms in tents until they can get them back into school and feeling somewhat secure and that they were not going to die at school. So, they ask for large tents as well.

They are worried about the church itself. The civil engineer and I toured the church yesterday. I wished I knew more about structural engineering and architecture, but I saw enough to wonder if the church is safe enough to hold Mass there on Sunday. There are cracks on either side of the main aisle that run the entire length of the church from the Altar to the front doors. All of the columns on the left side of the church facing the Altar are cracked in the same place all the way down the church. When I scratch at the cracks it is not clear to me if the cracks are just in the plaster finish around the columns or if they go into the core of the supporting columns themselves. The civil engineer is going to tap into one and try to assess that. In the meantime he is going to have the columns wrapped with large metal bands. There are cracks everywhere in the walls, and some go to the exterior of the church. On the front façade the right tower facing the church is completely cracked all the way through and sitting precariously atop the church. I don't think this tower can be saved and needs to be removed from the structure below it soon. The engineer says this will take a crane. The rectory seems to be stable and inhabitable as soon as Father Guy feels like he can psychologically get to the point he can sleep in it again.

These are a resilient people and they have experienced so much in their lives that they are really doing remarkably well. The people of LaValle have a real sense of community like I have never quite experienced before. Think of Fr. Guy as being the president of this community and all else happens through him. This young priest has way more on his shoulders than any of us can possibly imagine. Every problem, every need of every family comes to him. He is so stressed by the immense responsibility but doing a great job. But, his great leadership and all the resiliency in the world is not going to stop another catastrophe if we cannot get some food and shelter in here very soon. I know everyone in Nashville is doing everything possible to make this C130 come through but please, please step it up another notch.

I am going to talk to some friends at the USCCB and see if we can't get LaValle on the radar screen for more food assistance from Catholic Relief Services. The village elders do not want us to begin a food supply that is never ending. They want the people to grow their own food, raise their own animals, trade at the market place, and live life like they know how. All they are asking us for is some immediate food relief and shelter for these people so they can take a minute to pull themselves back together. I know what they are asking is totally reasonable and extremely urgent, and I feel the hopes of the leadership of this community being laid upon my shoulders. I pray I/we won't disappoint these people. I hope this message gets to all the people reading my post, but also to those in decision making positions and positions of power in our church, our community, and our government. We have the food, please get it here soon!

The committee decided to have a soccer game where the older men like me in the community play so that the children can laugh at us. I am thinking this is a great idea, but I don't know the first thing about playing soccer. The children are going to love this. I am WAY too old to be playing soccer, but I am probably way too old to be doing any of this, so what the hell? That is all for now. I will write soon again my friends.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation

**Tuesday, February 2, 2010; 8:38 pm**  
**LaValle, Haiti**  
(Email)

Monday and Tuesday Post

I started my day Monday with the really great Haitian coffee that I have grown to love, second only to the hot Haitian tea that Fr. Guy served at supper every night.

When we arrived at the hospital there were at least 70 patients waiting that soon swelled to over 100 within an hour. Some of the patients had walked over two and a half hours to get there and they would be waiting most of the day to see me or Dr. Richard by the end of the day. Every patient complains of not being able to sleep or eat not to mention the physical ailments that bring them from the entire region and as far away as Port au Prince just to be seen. I wonder how these people will ever move past the psychological trauma of this earthquake. The day was exhausting and Father Guy was not at the church when I arrived for supper.

From what I understand he had to go down to Jacmel for the funeral of his Godfather that had finally been pulled out of the rubble in one of the buildings in Jacmel. James went down to Jacmel with Dr Renee to pick up two medical people from New Orleans. One is an orthopedic surgeon the other is a Nurse Practitioner specializing in Emergency Medicine. We are hoping these two guys can help with the crushing load in the clinic every day at the hospital.

James took pictures of a three story building that the first floor had collapsed but the second and third floor remained intact. The second floor was not the first and the third was now the second. The garage attached to the building had a car in it that had been crushed and the woman who was in the car was still in it dead. They had written her name on the wall of the collapsed wall. More prayers for the dead.

There is a school that collapsed in Jacmel that still is a tomb for 200 college age kids that have not even begun to be pulled from the rubble. Parents stay around the school in the daytime to grieve their children's death.

The stress of the week began to show as night came because we did not take the time to decompress from all the things we have seen today, so I told James and Erin we have to gather with the other people here every night and have supper with them and talk out our day.

## Tuesday's Post

I went to the church first this morning to see if the Internet was working yet, and it was not. I was able to get through to Lois then Lori at the Cathedral, and it sure was good to here their voices! Lori is going to continue working on the Internet problem at the church. I have not been able to send my daily post because it is just too difficult to do on my blackberry. I started receiving emails from people wanting to know if I was Ok because nothing had been sent since Saturday. With no Internet in the church, the hotel or the hospital my blackberry seems to be the only Internet working in the LaValle right now.

I went on to the hospital where the orthopedic surgeon and the nurse practitioner were trying to help Dr. Richard with clinic. I decided to stay with the orthopedic surgeon to help him because he was clearly out of his element. In 2 hours he only managed to see three patients. He was handwriting complete history and physicals on the back of what they call charts here. It is actually one sheet of paper that they can use to charge the people that can pay. Plus he was telling everyone to come back in three days so he could follow up. I finally told him these people have to walk hours and hours to get here and telling everybody to come back to be seen again was an American luxury that this health care system and these people simply could not afford. I asked him to just ask those that are not better from the treatment we prescribe them to come back. [I also asked him] to please stop writing paragraphs and paragraphs of notes on each patient. He was really no help at all. Then he started telling the Haitians that work at the hospital how they had to change the way they were admitting patients to be seen for clinic and the pharmacy how they needed to change how they were doing their job.

These people see American doctors and nurses coming into their hospital several times a year for a week maybe two and they all want to change it to what makes sense for them. This only angered the staff and slowed down the process even more. This is field medicine. You have to work with what you have, treat what you can, and move on. This doctor will get this in another day or so I hope. I can't believe he arrived last night and is only staying until Saturday morning. But it turns out that he does prove to be useful for what faced us in the morning.

I went back to working with Dr. Richard (from Doctors without Borders). The two of us working together can see upwards of a 100 patients in a day. We consult one another we decide on a course of treatment, we treat the patient and we move on. It is what works here. It is the only thing that works here. We saw a lady that had a child in July and 9 days later the baby died. Sometime during the pregnancy the woman started developing a rash on her breast that now was an unbelievable case of mastitis or breast infection that covered both of her nipples and entire areola with draining sores. The most unbelievable infection of this kind I have ever seen. We hope our course of treatment works, because if it doesn't this is going to be a horrible cancer of both of her breasts instead of mastitis.

The next patient was a 70 year old very pleasant man that came into the exam room walking with the assistance of a walking stick that had been made from a tree branch. He was

wearing sandals, and it was immediately obvious this man had gangrene of all of his middle toe and part of his big toe. He was such a sweet, sweet gentle man, and it was heartbreaking to tell him that we were going to have to amputate at least the toes and probably part of his foot. He agreed to the surgery, so we admitted him to one of the tents outside so he would not have to walk two hours home and two hours back in the morning for his amputation. He took it all in great stride and tomorrow we operate. The orthopedic surgeon is going to be very useful for this procedure, so I am glad now that he is here.

Before we left the hospital, we started gathering supplies for the surgery in the morning and he wanted biogel, eight and half gloves, and a pair of ortho eight glove over that. I said, "Whoa! Doctor you are lucky we have gloves. I just want to know what size you wear. You have to take whatever is here!" As we are gathering supplies for the anesthesia and instrumentation for the surgery he starts saying how the store room needed to be inventoried and set up and soon. Both James and Erin, who have been working for 4 straight days on organizing the store room, kindly asked him to leave and to ask for what he needed and they would get it from him.

We are actually very well stocked for this operation tomorrow and the OR and anesthesia supplies are remarkably well stocked for this procedure. I pray this goes well. I am the only one in the hospital who has any anesthesia, circulating nurse, surgical assistant, or OR tech training at all. Pray this goes well, and I won't have to slap somebody before this patients gets the operation he needs in the morning!

Father Guy tells me this evening that on his way back up from Jacmel yesterday the rear differential went out on his car. So it is sitting on the mountain road between Jacmel and LaValle. As I am walking home one of the wise Haitian men that I have met on this trip tells me there is an old Haitian saying, "Behind every mountain that you must climb, there is another mountain waiting." I think this really sums up Fr. Guy's plight during this whole thing. His cell phone rings constantly. Someone is sick; someone is hungry; someone needs a place to stay; someone needs something all the time. I only hope I am able to be someone for Fr. Guy, if only to vent his frustrations.

On Thursday there will be a funeral for two seminarians from LaValle killed in the earthquake at the church, and the administrator for the diocese is coming (as they are without a bishop). Fr. Guy asked me to assist at this funeral. Of course I will, my friend, of course I will. That is all for tonight. Thanking God for Internet service at the hotel. Good night, my friends, until tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation  
Nashville, TN

**Wednesday, February 3, 2010; 8:00 pm**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Wednesday's Post from Haiti

Last night, after writing my post to you, I went to bed exhausted. Of course our friendly neighborhood dog that barks every night starting barking at 9:00pm and at 10:30 it was still barking, but I fell into a deep sleep from exhaustion.

At Midnight Doctor Charles Renee (the OB/GYN that is from here and practices in New Orleans) came knocking on my door at the hotel. There was a young girl who was in labor at the hospital, and she had been totally dilated and completely effaced and had been pushing for 5 hours. He wanted to know if I could come with him to do an emergency C-section. Of course I could come. It was pouring rain when we left the hotel about five minutes later. When we arrived at the hospital, I walked into the labor and delivery room and the baby came all on his own. I suctioned the baby's airway out and the baby started screaming which was music to my ears. After making sure the mother and baby were alright we returned to the hotel where of course I could not fall asleep for two hours. I last looked at my watch at 3:00am and was back up at 6:30 to get ready for the amputation that was scheduled for the morning.

After breakfast we all headed down to the hospital to try and figure out how this ancient steam autoclave worked so that we could sterilize the instruments that the orthopedic surgeon brought with him for the surgery. Again, this operating room is remarkably well stocked, but the hospital staff is not allowed in the OR area because they don't know anything about surgery and because if they are allowed access to the OR things seem to go missing. So, I spent the entire day finding everything we needed, setting the case up, bringing the patient to holding, starting the IV, giving pre-ops, sitting with the patient until surgery, doing the anesthesia for the surgery, plus taking on the role of what would be the circulating nurses in a regular OR. This man was so sweet. It was a pleasure spending the day with him and getting him through the amputation of what ended up being his big toe and second toe.

After recovering him, I left him with a nursing tech. When I walked out of the operating room, one of the translators told me that I was to go to Father Guy's church. I assumed it was for supper, and I really looked forward to sitting down for a minute because it was already a long, long day. When I got to St. Jean de Baptiste, I was told to go into the church. Just starting was a vigil service for one of the seminarians that lived in the St. Rose of Lima area of LaValle who was crushed in the earthquake. None of the clergy vested for the service but instead sat close to the family in the church. The singing again was absolutely beautiful. Some hymns, some chant, the rosary, prayers and talks from priests, seminarians, nuns, and two members of the family. Again, I could not understand the language but the grief was clear.

Three hours later, after the service ended, the mother of the seminarian came to tell me how grateful she was that I came to the Vigil Service. Then Father Guy asked me to go with him to take them home. Probably 20 members of the family piled into a cab and the bed of a truck, yet they insisted I sit in the passenger side front next to Father Guy. We drove through the valley stopping every so often to let different ones out. Everyone came to my window and thanked me for coming. When we got to the last house the seminarian's mother and 4 siblings got out and I asked them if I could give them a blessing. We stood in the driveway of their modest home and I asked God to please give peace to this family. They wept openly while I blessed them. They stood in the driveway until Fr. Guy and I drove off and out of sight.

On the drive back to the hotel Fr. Guy asked me for the full name of Bishop Choby so he could write to him and thank him for letting me come to LaValle. When Father Guy dropped me at the hotel I realized that I hadn't eaten all day. The hotel had bread and butter left from supper which I was glad to have. Now I write so very, very tired but very happy and blessed by the opportunity to be so close to God in these people. I received news that things are firming up for food and relief from Nashville. I will be happy to see you when you come. Good night my friends. I will write tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation  
St. John de Baptise

**Thursday, February 4, 2010; 6:55 am**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email to Deacon Jim from Bill Carter, chair of Cathedral Haiti Committee)

Jim,

As of this email, Robb Anderson and I (and possibly 2 more people) are leaving Nashville Saturday afternoon for Miami. All the food is leaving via truck this morning for arrival at a warehouse in Miami due to arrive late Friday evening-early Saturday morning. It will be authorized, weighed and loaded onto the DC4 Charter Saturday for a 7:30 a.m. EST Sunday flight out of Miami for Jacmel. Charter service says the flight is 3.5 hours putting us in the Jacmel airport area at around 11:00 a.m. EST. (I am hoping to have tents committed today that can hopefully be shipped into Miami by Friday as well, but timing and shipping factors may prevent that for this trip. But of course we push!)

Here are some major considerations for you and Fr. Guy regarding our arrival.

- As you recall, all the food is on pallets. We doubt there is a forklift at the airport so we anticipate we will have to off load all of it by hand. We need to have enough people to

form a human chain to offload off the plane and onto the trucks in one process if at all possible.

- We need enough trucks to make one trip if at all possible. I'm concerned about having to leave any of the food at the airport for any length of time because we have to make several trips; but if we have to do that, then we need to be prepared to safeguard the remaining food while you go up the hill and then come back down again.
- I will get several tarps today to use as covers for the truck loads as we transport up to LaValle. We anticipate that we will have to slow down several times, and we do not wish to create any incidents as we go up the mountain.

Lastly for now...What else do we need to bring that Robb and I can carry with us...personal items, etc. Keep in mind we go to Miami on a domestic flight...probably Southwest...and will be subject to all the security procedures.

Waiting for your thoughts and reply. Looking forward to seeing you again.

*Bill Carter*

Cathedral Haiti Committee

**Thursday, February 4, 2010; 7:04 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Thursday's Post

This morning I had to wake up early because the funeral for the seminarian was at 7:00am. Who has a funeral at 7:00 a.m.? What I have learned is that when you are told that Mass is at 8:30 on Sundays or this funeral is at 7:00 a.m., that is the time you start to gather in anticipation of having Mass in, say, 45 minutes.

When I arrived at St. Jean de Baptiste at 7:00 a.m. the administrator of the diocese was introduced to me. We sat in Fr. Guy's dining room and had a nice conversation. The administrator's name is Father Domond also because he is a first cousin of Father Guy Domond. He spoke wonderful English and was a very pleasant and warm man. In the conversation he told me that this seminarian for whom we were about to celebrate the funeral Mass was at a conference of seminarians in Port au Prince. They were leaving the conference and 13 of them were in a truck. As they were driving through the gates of the seminary the archway over the gates fell and killed all 13 of them. The truck continued to run with the dead seminarians in the cab and in the back until the gas ran out. Such a horrible story!

After coffee and bread we went and vested for the funeral. There were 12 priests and 14 seminarians. The administrator of the diocese was the Presider and I was the deacon of the Mass. As we were vesting there was a prayer before Mass at which the names of all of the seminarians who were killed were read. All the parents and families of all of the seminarians were there. As their relative's name was called a wail came up from the families. The sacristy is behind the Altar at St. John de Baptiste, so I could look out and see the grief and sadness in the faces of these people as they cried out in sadness at the name of their loved one. It was so sad.

We processed out and revered the Altar and the Mass began. At different times throughout the Mass different people in the assembly - both men and women - would be so overcome with grief that they literally would have to be carried out of the church, but the sound of their crying was still to be heard as the church is open air for comfort. The Administrator of the Diocese told me to distribute Communion in the main aisle of the church. After Communion he spoke to the people from his heart. First one and then the other began to cry out with arms outstretched in the most heart wrenching grief I have ever experienced. The entire church was filled with wailing. The screaming, crying and wailing gave me a new understanding of the scripture meaning of "wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The seminarians were seated on either side of the sanctuary facing one another and were also in tears. I could not hold back my own tears as Father Domond gave the final blessing. Then all of the clergy one by one went and greeted the family of this seminarian seated in the first row on either side of the main aisle. I cried with them as each one greeted me with an embrace. I finally I left the church with Fr. Dumond and returned to the sacristy. The crying and wailing went on long after we left the church. Such grief is so painful to see. I can't imagine what they must be feeling.

After the funeral Mass we all gathered in the courtyard for a meal. It was with the Administrator of the diocese, all of the priests and all of the seminarians, the immediate family of the seminarian, two sisters (nuns), and me. It was a pleasant meal but one of the brothers broke down uncontrollably again at the meal. So, so sad.

When I left the funeral and meal to go to the hospital I was emotionally spent. I had been told that the people knew that the doctor from Doctors without Borders had left after clinic yesterday and so there would not be many in clinic. I walked to the front yard of the hospital where our patients are staying in tents. I saw that was not to be the case. Over 100 patients were waiting to be seen. I walked into clinic and there were two new doctors (interns actually) from a medical school in Haiti that will be here in LaValle for awhile. They were working hard and seeing patients! Content that the patients were going to be seen today, I took the opportunity to take a break from that chaos. I really needed a break, so I just left and went to my hotel to have a little alone time to decompress. James got Dr. Renee's keys and drove me back to the hotel. It is good to take the afternoon off.

The owner of the hotel is expecting some bigwig related governor or something so everything is spic and span. The repairs to the hotel from the earthquake, the extra supports that

were put into provide more support for the building, have all been covered in stone. They are expecting a group of 20 from Sweden with a television crew here tonight. Evidently they have been in Port au Prince making a TV documentary. They will shoot in LaValle tomorrow and then move on.

Since these bigwig visitors are here we actually have running hot water! So, I am going to take a shower and have supper with the visiting governor. All of the LaValle leaders will be here at the hotel tonight including Fr. Guy. So many of these people are now my friends I am looking forward to dinner with them. I will write more later my friends.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation

**Saturday, February 6, 2010; 10:20 a.m.**  
**LaValle, Haiti**  
(Email)

*My Friends and Family,*  
*Please share with everyone you think might want to see as I can't email to everyone from here.*

Friday's Post from LaValle

We slept late today, until about 7:30am, thinking that the numbers of people streaming into the hospital would be much more manageable today because of the new doctors from New Orleans that have come to help. I am not sure what happened but by 10:00 the clinic was hopelessly behind, so I offered to help one of the doctors and see some of the patients. He said, yes, that he had paperwork and administration that he needed to do, and I could see his patients. "Whoa, Doctor!! You and I will both see patients, but I am not doing your work so you can do paperwork!" He got the picture and they gave me a treatment room and George, a translator, who is Haitian. He currently lives in Boston and came to translate.

Half way through seeing many of the common ailments that these patients are presenting with, two people holding up an 85 year old man came into the clinic. He was short of breath, a blood pressure of 220/130, huge swollen ankles and feet, and wet sounding lungs. I have never seen a patient in Congestive Heart failure this bad before. I called the hospital doctor and told him we had to admit this man. The doctor did not have a clue what to do to treat this man, so I had to leave clinic, start an IV, put in a foley, give IV lasix and digoxin, and give a blood pressure medicine. I got another tent set up outside in what has become our intensive care unit and got the man settled. I am wondering now even with this aggressive treatment if this man will

last through the night. There is no nasal oxygen to give the man to help with his difficulty breathing.

My patient that we did the amputation on was lying in a wet bed in his tent this morning and the dressing covering the amputation was soaking wet. I felt sick in the pit of my stomach. I had the translator come and tell the family that this could not happen. He had to be kept dry, and they needed to get him up. So I got the supplies together took off his old dressing, and I was very happy to see the site of the surgery looked very good. I cleaned his whole foot, irrigated with saline, and redressed the wound. I went into the store room and found a crutch and taught the man how to use the crutch and told him to get out of bed and stay out until he was tired and needed rest. The next time I saw him he was up and cleaned up and walking around the hospital really well with the crutch even bearing a little bit of weight on the foot with the amputation. He was so happy when I saw him, and so was I! I will send him home tomorrow if we can find him a ride so he won't have to walk the 2 hours home. Saw many more patients before the day was done.

Looking around the village you really don't get a sense for the great need for tents. The man with the amputation is a perfect example. When he goes home tomorrow he will be sleeping outside because where he lives on the next mountain none of the houses withstood the quake. At dinner tonight I found out that the workers at the hotel that we have gotten to know are living with ten other families just out of site of the hotel with no tents. The people living here all this time don't have tents, and the people streaming into the region won't have tents. Appearances are so deceiving. I realize now that when I met with the mayor and village elders and they said the need is for 4,000 tents, it was a very accurate description.

I hope I remembered to tell you on my post yesterday that the night before last we had a 4.2 aftershock around midnight.

Yesterday during the funeral I noticed from where I set next to the Presider's chair that the columns on the right side of the church were not lined up quite like they were when I arrived. I mentioned this to Theodore, the engineer here, last night at the party at the hotel, and he said he had noticed the same thing and thought maybe metal rings around the columns might be needed. I sent Robb Anderson and Bill Carter a note about that this morning, because I was not sure the church was safe enough any longer to have Sunday Mass. I was thinking I need to tell Fr. Guy to close the church and plan to have Mass outdoors at the soccer field. The last thing I want is to do this unnecessarily because the church is the one place of safety and refuge for the many, many people that cannot or will not sleep in their houses. Building architecture and engineering is so far out of my realm of knowledge I really did not know quite what to do. George who translated for me today is an engineer from Boston, so I asked him to come to the church with me today and give me his best guess.

George explained to me that the weight of the church was actually on the walls and balconies of the church. What had happened was that the church actually swayed in the earthquakes and that the exterior walls had swayed at different times and intensity, but that the

structure did not appear to have been shaken severely up and down. These center columns that have moved since I have been here are really only supporting the wooden upper structure and a metal roof. He pointed out areas that definitely needed pretty immediate work but that this 100 year old structure was not in danger of spontaneously falling....at least for today. I'm praying he is right, and I have decided not to ask Fr. Guy to close the church for Mass this Sunday as this would cause him an unbelievable amount of stress. I can't even begin to describe what it would do to the people. I base this decision on both what Theodore the engineer from here and George the engineer from Boston have told me. But, I will feel better when Robb Anderson gets here on Sunday from Nashville to tell me this was the right thing to do. I am asking for lots of prayers from all of you that this was the right thing to do. I'm talking the kind of praying where you take to your knees.

Well another day in Haiti comes to an end and many, many challenges have been faced today and met, so I am off to bed for another day. Will write again tomorrow my friends. Au revoir till then.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville  
St. John Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Saturday, February 6, 2010; 8:02 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Saturday Post

Since the clinic at the hospital does not see patients on Saturday, I decided to spend the entire day today with Father Guy, but first I road from the hotel to the hospital with Dr. Charles Renee. Dr. Renee is returning on the flight that Bill Carter and Robb Anderson are arriving on tomorrow. I am finding that when the opportunity to get out of Haiti presents itself you have to take it if it is anywhere close to the time you wanted to leave anyway. So Dr. Renee, George Laurent the engineer from Boston, James, and Erin are returning on the plane to Miami after we have unloaded the food and other cargo. Fr. Guy and I and the people from the church will bring the supplies back to St. Jean Baptist to keep for the next distribution.

Dr. Renee gave me a ride up to the hospital and then I could make the short walk to the church. I took with me the last tent I had brought from Nashville and had kept in case I had to sleep in a tent. When I arrived at the hospital I gave it to the elderly man whose toes we had amputated. He was so happy, and he jumped up and gave me the biggest hug followed by one

from his daughter and son-in-law. You would have thought I had just given them the keys to their new home on that television show on ABC Home Makeovers.

I stopped in to see the patient I wrote about in yesterday's post that was in Congestive Heart Failure. He was breathing so much better but his ankles were still very swollen, so I continued the same treatment. Since Dr. Renee is leaving the entire operating room portion of the hospital will be locked, so I gathered the things I might need in order to do clinic next week. But right now, since I won't have a translator and the hospital doctor is here and two young doctors have arrived to do their social service stint for the government, I am thinking I will spend the remainder of my time here in Haiti with Father Dumond, Bill Carter, Robb Anderson, and whoever they might be bringing with them. While I am here I want to see if these doctors can step up and meet the ever increasing need for care at the hospital.

Fr. Guy was finishing the first of a two part food distribution of some food that had arrived from USAID yesterday when I arrived at the church. He was going to do two other distributions today, one in Muzak. I asked him if I could go with him to Muzak for the distribution there. He seemed hesitant but told me I could go. I have come to realize that Fr. Guy wants me to feel like a guest of honor, which I do, but in so doing he doesn't want me to see bad things. Muzak turned out to be one of those bad things.

We went to the hospital and Fr. Guy got the ambulance. We went back to the church and loaded it full of bags of wheat flour from USAID and headed down to Muzak. We stopped by the police station and picked up the policeman to go with us. Hmmm???? The distribution of the supplies in the larger truck that had gone ahead of us was underway when we arrived in Muzak. At the church, Fr. Guy has everyone lineup on the outside walls of church compound and only lets one in at a time: their name is checked off, they get a coupon, get their food, and then go out another exit. It is very orderly and serves the neediest first.

Muzak was another story altogether. They had pulled the big USAID truck into the walled compound of the school, pulled the truck straight in against a wall, and then let about 600 people in the compound. It was the same process, but it was chaos. Many people showed up that were not going to receive food, and the distribution seemed to take a long, long time. When the big truck was done it closed up, took all the staff that had been passing the supplies out, and left. That left Fr. Guy, our driver, the police officer, and one other man to distribute what we had brought down in the ambulance.

I met a young man who was the English teacher at St. Therese School, and he said that he was going to be my security. That turned out to be a blessing because everyone that was not on the list to receive aid that day thought that I could get them on the list. They were all very kind, but there was not really anything I could do because Fr. Guy was handling the distribution from the back of the ambulance. I did not want to do anything to upset that applecart. As the afternoon wore on there were a couple of men that had become drunk. At first they were loud, then belligerent, and then they seemed confrontational with Fr. Guy. Somehow he was able to keep them happy and at bay, but I would not have been so savvy, so I was happy to have my security

guy. I took him behind the school building and gave him some cash for protecting me so no one could see that I even had cash. The rest of the afternoon went without incident, but it was the first time – and only time -- I have felt even the least bit afraid that something might happen.

The people in Muzak are even poorer than the people that live in the village area around the church. While there I saw something I only had seen in pictures in medical textbooks. There was a man with rickets (deformities of the legs caused from a type of malnutrition). Here there were people wearing only rags and some with no shoes. They seemed so much more desperate for aid, if that could be possible.

During the distribution a man came up to me and said, “Fancy seeing another white face in this crowd.” His name was Andy Eakin. It was so nice to be able to speak fluent English with someone. Andy worked for USAID International and was based in Scotland and was, in fact, a native of Scotland. He was fascinated that my last name was “McKenzie,” and he said he wished he had a great Scottish name like that. He had with him a photographer who spoke fluent Creole, looked Haitian, but spoke English like only comes from Queens in New York. I asked him how in the world he ever developed a New York accent. He explained to me he was born of Haitian parents in New York and grew up in New York and Florida. Growing up he spent two months out of every year in Haiti visiting his relatives. He was happy to be working in Haiti now. Both of them are great guys. Andy told me that his organization had figured conservatively that 450,000 people had left Port au Prince into the surrounding countryside and cities. He said it was impossible to know how many had come into the LaValle area but that 100,000 people would not be an unreasonable estimate. He wondered how that many people could possibly be fed in the area with most of the aid only going to Port au Prince and not to Jacmel. He talked about how important it was to get the food aid in now because of the circumstances but also how important it was that foreign aid not be the only supply of food in the long range. The end result of that type of aid was that it enslaved people. This makes a lot of sense to me, but we both wondered how the transition can happen because of the whole situation in Haiti. We both agreed this is what we should be doing here, now, and today, and we would leave that big picture questions up to the aid organizations and governments involved. Sounds like a plan to me. I explained about the Cathedral’s sister parish program and how long we had been a presence here and that we were in for the long haul. He was impressed with our work.

When the big truck left the compound in Muzak they followed it. Andy’s job was to monitor the food distributions for security assessment. He was not to provide any security only monitor the situation.

After Fr. Guy had distributed all the food there was he explained to the people that more food was coming and they should be patient. Sadly many people turned away and left as he closed the ambulance doors and drove us back to the church. As soon as we got back to the church, Fr. Guy started the distribution of the last of the food that had come yesterday. It was again completely orderly and totally secure because it was done from the church in the way I have described above, a stark contrast to what we had just experience in Muzak.

After the last distribution, I returned to the hotel where I ran into Andy, the man from Scotland. Andy had just returned from helping a woman who was 8 and half months pregnant carry her big bag of wheat down to the bottom of the mountain. He had just walked back up. He was completely out of breath and sunburned like me, so we sat at the hotel had a drink and cooled off. Andy left to return to do some work in Jacmel. This is another friend who I plan to stay in touch with. Tomorrow I will assist Fr. Guy at Mass at St. John Baptiste then take the trucks down to Jacmel to pick up Bill and Robb and the supplies from Nashville. I will be happy to see them.

There was another aftershock this morning at 5:00 a.m. I wish they would stop, so the people that could go back into their homes would feel like they could.

That is all for now. Good night my friends I will write again tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville, TN  
St. John Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Monday, February 8, 2010; 8:00 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Saturday Post From LaValle, Haiti

During the night last night there were three pretty significant aftershock tremors. Also, Dr. Renee knocked on my door at 2:00 this morning to tell me I might need to come in to the hospital to help him with an emergency C-section. Not a great night overall. I did not end up having to go in to help with a C-section because Dr. Renee was able to deliver the baby with the midwives on staff at the hospital. I was happy when I woke up at 6:30 a.m. to realize that I had slept the entire night, except for the three aftershocks and a knock on the door from Dr. Renee, and felt quite rested.

After a nice breakfast I actually got a ride down to St. Jean Baptiste Church for Mass, so I wasn't going to be hot and sweaty. When I arrived at the church [[I discovered] the decision had been made to close the church and move Mass to the soccer field down the road from the church because of the aftershocks during the night. The soccer field is located in the walled school area that is run by the Brothers. The Altar was set up on the porch of the school, and they tried to bring the benches and chairs from the church and only set them up where there is shade. So, when we started Mass there were probably 500 people directly in front of us but to our left, all along the front of the school, there was well over 1,000 people all dressed in their Sunday best.

Again I assisted at Mass but was uncomfortable that we would get delayed and not be at the Jacmel airport when Tom and Bill arrived and James, Erin, Dr, Renee, and George Laurent the engineer were supposed to leave. I got an email from Tom Cigarran that said Tom and Bill had taken off at 9:15am and that would put them landing in Jacmel around 12.45pm. I thought we would have plenty of time. After Mass had to be moved at the last minute down the road, we started late. Even though we were outside on a hot Haitian morning the Mass was not shortened one second. And because it was not inside of a building I think there were actually more people than last Sunday. Mass was beautiful. Fr. Guy [gave] what I can only guess was a stirring sermon because the people were mesmerized by his preaching which went on well over 30 minutes. (So no complaining, my Cathedral friends, if I ever preach too long!) I distributed Communion for what seemed like forever. Because all of the community business is announced at Mass the end of Mass the announcements go on for another 30 minutes. I am beginning to think Bill and Tom might not get met at the plane after all, but it was only 11:00am. Surely we had plenty of time, but then Fr. Guy had to have breakfast after Mass since we only had coffee and bread before Mass, which was plenty of breakfast for me.

In case any of you don't know, Bill Carter, Tom Anderson, and Tom Cigarran (the leaders of our Nashville Cathedral Haiti Committee) are considered VIPs when they come to visit, so Fr. Guy had one of the boys who lives either at the church compound with his family or works for Fr. Guy wash the truck so it would be clean for Mr. Carter and Mr. Anderson. Now since there is no water to spare for washing a car under normal circumstances, washing the car involved wiping it down with dry cloths until all of the dust was wiped off. Then the floor mats were taken out and shaken and the interior was wiped down--all for Mr. Carter and Mr. Anderson. So I'm thinking, "What am I? Chopped liver?" I don't remember any cars being sent for me all spic and span. (For those of you who have traveled the mountain road from LaValle down to Jacmel, you know what a complete waste of time any cleaning endeavor would be, but nothing less would do to get ready for Mr. Carter and Mr. Anderson.

We finally left the church with James, Erin, and George all riding down the mountain with Dr. Renee, me, and Father Guy in the air conditioned 4 passenger Mitsubishi truck which belonged to the principle of the school. Because we were running on Haitian time, we just made it for the 12:45 arrival when we started out immediately after the 8:30 Mass.

The plane that Bill and Rob came in on is a vintage DC4 that actually flew in the Berlin Air lift. This 1945 aircraft had the attention of everyone at the Jacmel airport. The pilot circled out over the ocean and came from in the opposite direction that I had landed when I arrived, so when they circled out over the ocean they disappeared from our site. The pilot wanted to approach the airport as low as possible, so we didn't see the airplane again until we saw the wheels brushing the tops of the trees as it came in. It landed beautifully on the end of the runway. We all thought how great it had landed, and they had plenty of room to bring the aircraft to a stop. Well it kept going and going and going down the runway and finally turned at the very end of the runway crushing one of the lights. Robb tells me the left braking system failed when they

landed and they couldn't use just the right as it would spin the plane off the runway. Some how, some way, the pilot got this plane stopped just before running completely off the end of the runway. WOW!

Remember me telling you when we arrived there was an airplane that had lost its landing gear and crashed landed off the side of the runway? Well, as Robb and Bill are on this plane thinking it isn't going to stop they look out of the window and there is that plane still sitting there crashed off to the side. Clean diapers for all!

We got the plane unloaded on the tarmac and then loaded into a six ton truck by the Canadian military and some teenage boys-who of course expected payment. Then the Haitian authorities insisted rather forcefully that we give them a tent. We finally left the airport with all of our belongings except for forty dollars and two tents.

Driving through Jacmel was again very scary. The tremors that closed the church also caused some more of the buildings to collapse in Jacmel, so the Canadian military had the main road through Jacmel blocked. Our detour took us through some pretty devastated areas and people looking at the truck knowing that it had aid relief on it. Fortunately the tent boxes don't have the word tent written on them, so we got through Jacmel safely and started that hour trip up the mountain. Fortunately the VIPs that had arrived deserved nothing but the best, and the air conditioned ride up to LaValle was relatively comfortable or as much as this ride can be.

Fr. Guy had the ladies at the church prepare a wonderful supper complete with champagne and Prestige beer. The men at the church tucked away the supplies in a building for the distribution later. We went down for the end of the soccer game at the same field where Mass had been earlier. A little DJ music at the end topped off the evening. Robb, Bill, and I went to the hotel, had a cold Prestige, and went to bed wondering who won the Super Bowl.

Good night my friends more tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation  
St. John Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Tuesday, February 9, 2010; 9:12 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Monday's Post

Bill, Robb, and I gathered for Breakfast in plenty of time for Fr. Guy to come to the hotel and pick us up at 8:30 a.m. for a trip to LaVout, so we could assess the damage to the school and the homes there with a side trip to Sacre Coeur Church, which sustained heavy damage. We were

ready to go at 8:30 a.m., but I reminded Bill and Robb that we were on Haiti time, which I find runs typically one hour to one and a half hours behind. Mind you, I am not complaining because I am by no stretch of the imagination a morning person, and I enjoyed spending this time strategizing with Bill and Robb.

Fr. Guy arrived at 9:45 a.m. apologizing profusely for being late. We noticed the truck had been completely cleaned inside and out for Mr. Carter and Mr. Anderson. I love being attached to these two guys who are attached to Tom Cigarran who holds a status here second only to Father Guy, so I am thankful to have both the name of the Cathedral of the Incarnation and Tom Cigarran attached to me.

Fr. Guy complained of a headache, so I gave him a Tylenol making a note that I need to check his blood pressure soon. We left the hotel and headed down to St. Jean Baptiste Church where Fr. Guy was immediately bombarded with problems to solve. We finally departed for the trip to LaVout around 10:30 a.m. The plan for the day included us coming back for a meeting with the Earthquake Committee at 2:00 p.m. In the truck going down were Fr. Guy, another priest, me, Bill Carter, and Robb Anderson in the cab, and in the back were a translator that Fr. Guy had for us for the day, Theodore the engineer from LaValle, and Michaelange (Creole for Michelangelo) who works for Fr. Guy at the church and is documenting the earthquake photographically.

As we passed Muzak and got closer to LaVout it was great to have Bill and Robb to tell me about the history of the roads, the community, the school and even the water system in LaVout. The incredible difference made by Tom Cigarran's vision and the work of the people of the Cathedral becomes even more evident as the day progresses.

As we drove into the LaVout area we stopped at several of the houses along the way. The devastation to these houses was pretty complete. Many of these structures were wooden frames with mortar in between the wood studs. A lot of times the wooden frames would survive but the mortar between the studs just crumbled. Many of these people were sleeping outside under tents made of blankets or old sheets strung together. We stopped at one house that was made of concrete on the side of the crest of one of the mountains. As we walked down to the house the ground had huge crevices that had separated during the earthquake. One big rain and this whole side of the mountain is going to become another of the many landslides you see around this mountainous region. The house itself had cracks all through it with one going the length of the house on the floor. This whole mountain looks like another disaster waiting to happen.

Fr. Guy had arranged for the parents and children of the school to gather in the chapel waiting to meet Mr. Carter when we arrived at the LaVout school and chapel. They were all dressed in their Sunday best. We did an inspection of the school buildings before we went into the chapel to meet with the people. Our inspection showed cracks along exterior walls and corners, but the buildings in general looked good to my naïve eye. Robb Anderson and Theodore inspected much closer and were making recommendations to one another as to how to secure the buildings. Robb and Theodore then went off to the spring to see how the water system that brings

water to the cistern at the school could be repaired. Bill went into the chapel and was taken with Fr. Guy to the front of the church with a translator and introduced to the people. He was warmly received with applause. I came in and sat in the front next to Bill and Fr. Guy, while Bill and Fr. Guy stood in front of the Altar to speak.

Bill gave an eloquent speech explaining that the goal was to do everything possible to get the children back into school safely, and then the floor was opened to questions. One little girl asked that since so many children were coming into the area from Port au Prince and Jacmel would it be possible for these children to go to school at LaVout. Wow! A great question! But to answer such a question one needed way more information than what was available to us at that moment. Where were these children from? Where were they in their education? Culturally could that be done? Socially, could they be integrated into a new school system? What does the local education committee want to do about these children?

Bill gave a brilliant answer. He told them that we did not decide who went to the school before the earthquake and we would not be deciding who went to school after the earthquake. We would be deferring those decisions to Fr. Guy and the principal of the school. Great answer! There were questions asked about a clinic in the area and vaccinations for the children. The elephant in the room was that most of these people were sleeping outside and everything else is hard to prioritize until this problem can be addressed. Tents are gold here. Somehow my face has gotten attached to tents, and I am being constantly approached for a tent. I have to explain that the distribution is being done through the church and they will be fairly distributed throughout the region. The sadness that answer brings in their faces is always disturbing. This request never feels like a hustle or asking for a handout. It always feels like a pretty desperate plea.

At the end of the meeting with the parents and children in the church, I asked the people if I could give them a blessing from the people of the Cathedral. With the translator beside me, I extended my hands over them and gave them this blessing: "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine upon you. May the Lord give all of you peace. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

After the meeting one of the parents split open coconuts with a machete so we could drink the juice. It was delicious. Bill and I then joined Robb and Theodore up at the spring to strategize about fixing the water system down to the school. We all piled back in the truck to go back to LaValle stopping at Sacre Coeur church.

The church, while still standing, was in shambles. The pictures I made inside this church were some of the most moving, e.g. the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus standing untouched while the walls around it were crumbled, a painting of the Pieta with the Blessed Mother holding the dead Jesus and the head of Jesus crumbled, the station of Jesus nailed to the cross with the body of Jesus crumbled. I hope to be able to share these with you when I return home. The bell tower and the front wall of the church cannot possibly be saved. Those of you who have come many times from the Cathedral will remember this church as a place where you held an eye clinic in years past.

We returned to the courtyard of the church for the meeting of the Earthquake Committee, much like the one arranged for me the first Sunday I arrived. All of the representatives for the region along with the engineer, the head of the education committee, the psychology committee, of course Fr. Guy, and the congressman were present. The mayor did not bother coming to this meeting. I think he is finding that he might be expected to do something if he comes. I have to point out again that Fr. Guy is the de facto Mayor of the region. All happens through him and because of him and cannot happen without him.

Bill again spoke through a translator to make clear again our commitment to the schools and the parish. Questions were again asked about the children moving into the region. There was a discussion about trying to rebuild one of the homes that would somehow serve as a model for other rebuilding efforts that would take into consideration both hurricanes and earthquakes. There was discussion about the many children who are falling through the cracks because they cannot afford to pay the tuition at even the public schools. The dire need for immediate shelter and food, and again how to deal with all of the people moving into the region, was the issue that stands in front of the others. The meeting went well, and Bill was very good at explaining that we would take all of these things into consideration as we returned back to the Cathedral to present to our committee. The one thing we were able to commit to was the support of the three schools in LaVout, Tuf, and Muzak, and to get the rest of the tents and food supplies we have already gathered down here as quickly as possible.

Good points were also made by Bill that we have a long history with the people of LaValle, and we will not be one of those aid organizations that will come through, promise a lot of things but never deliver. He also made it clear that we have no intention of being imperialistic about what we will be able to do. We have no intention of telling the people of LaValle that they have to do things our way. I think this is a good point. Our effort as Catholics should be based on our basic view of human dignity which is rooted in our belief in the sanctity of human life. To come into Haiti during this catastrophe and treat these people like they do not have the good sense to figure things out on their own would be a grave mistake and cause way more harm than good.

Theodore, the engineer, was able to prioritize their needs simply for us: food, shelter, and getting the children back to school. I like things made simple. In liturgy we call that noble simplicity.

The congressman said we should think of Haiti as a new Haiti, not in terms that everything was made new and fresh but that all thinking of how to help and when to help should not be based on past experience alone. The earthquake has changed everything. The education committee has a plan in place that feels right to me. What there is of a government has not put the education of the children as a high priority in their plan for earthquake relief. The government has suspended all schools in the country until March 1. This date is an arbitrary date, and it needs to be understood it is not a date that in any stretch of the imagination means that the government has inspected any school and deemed it safe. It is just a date. The local education

committee wants to determine when the schools can be open based on, first, the safety of the building or an alternate to the building if it is not safe. Second, after they have met with the principals of the schools in planning curriculum. Third, they have met with teachers to determine how the children can be kept abreast of studies while out of school, and fourth, after they meet with the parents to determine when the students and the children can psychologically make the jump to start back to school once all of the other things are in place. What cannot happen is for schools to start before the government's arbitrary March 1<sup>st</sup> date nor can we dictate that the three schools we support open before the others as this will set apart an automatic elite part of the society, which would cause way more problems within this community than any that may be solved by someone from Nashville dictating when schools should start.

I completely agree with this course of action, and while our schools could physically be ready within a couple of months, I don't think it wise or prudent to push these children back into schools until the community, the principals, the teachers, the parents and children have ownership in that decision. The meeting finally ended with prayer, and we returned back to the hotel for dinner and a bit of decompressing from the day's events. I left my computer with Bill so he could do his email and went off to bed for a good night's sleep. Our friendly dog of course started barking the minute I put my head on the pillow. How does he know??????

That is all for today my friends. Thank you all for reading the ramblings of a deacon in Haiti.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville, TN, St. Jean Baptise, LaValle, Haiti

**Wednesday, February 10, 2010; 9:17 a.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

*Okay, guys, I went to Catholic schools and actually graduated from Father Ryan High School. Mr. Wooten at Father Ryan would have been horrified at the first draft of my post last night that I sent to you this morning because of the many spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure mistakes. I fully admit, in spite of my 20 total years of education, I have no concept of the comma. The guys from the Swiss Red Cross were a little chatty as I was trying to write last night, so writing proved to be rather difficult. I apologize for the many errors, so I am compelled by my memories of the Sisters of Mercy to resend an edited version of yesterday's post. – Deacon Jim*

*[I did not send Jim's original post. Good thing I saw his correction before I sent the first Post! – Fr. Ed]*

Tuesday Post From Haiti  
February 9, 2010

It is 6:30 p.m. as I sit down to write this post. Five minutes ago there was a pretty significant aftershock here at the hotel that rattled the glasses and made some plaster fall from the ceiling of the main hotel building. All of the staff is sitting outside now, and I wonder if we will get dinner. Bill Carter was trying to tell Fr. Guy and the staff here as we got out of the car that the aftershocks will get smaller and farther and farther apart. Before our interpreter could translate I asked him not to say that because they won't believe anything we say from now on. Bill said, "But this is the first one we have had since we have been here." I reminded him that this is Tuesday and they have only been in Haiti about 48 hours, and there were three aftershocks the night before they arrived. He agreed and rethought trying to be reassuring about the aftershocks.

We started today at the hotel trying again to work on Fr. Guy's Internet. You would not believe how extremely complicated this has been. The satellite signal comes from a U.S. company called Hughes Net. The bill is paid to a Haitian company called Multicom, and there is a third company involved called Skynet. Everybody gets a cut of the payment, but none of these companies can seem to get the Internet back on. The computer system at the church works. The computer shows the Wifi is there, but every time you try to get online you get a message from the U.S. company that the bill is past due, but you can't pay them the bill. It has probably cost me \$300.00 in international calls trying to get this resolved. Bill Carter tried all morning as well. He asked, "What do you do when you pass the frustration stage?" I suggested that we just start gnawing off our own arms. If anyone from the States has any ideas on how to get Fr. Guy's Internet back up, we are open to any suggestion. The last thing we want to do is to leave Fr. Guy without Internet.

The other thing I worked on from here was working with a medical missionary at the Jacmel airport that can arrange flights for people doing relief work out of Jacmel to the States or the Bahamas. We think we will be able to get all of our main objectives met here at St. Jean de Baptiste by Friday. Now the big question is how do we get out of here? When I emailed our contact a note, it came back saying that her email had been compromised and to not send money to her through it. I hope all of her email is getting to her as this is the only connection I have as a way to get out of here.

After the morning working at the hotel, we walked down to the hospital so that Bill and Robb could check out the structure and the cracks from the earthquake. Following the visit to the hospital we went to the church to meet up with Fr. Guy. He had to go to another town and do the funeral of his Godfather. After the funeral he had to meet with his family. When he arrived at the church he already looked tired. We were to go to the school in Muzak to inspect the building and talk to the principal about plans for getting the students back in school. As we were about to leave, two men from the Swiss Red Cross showed up at the church wanting to assess the

situation. It seems that these men actually have resources available to them, so we sat down and helped them assess the needs. They think they can help us with the dire need for tents in the area. We are hoping this is true. After a long conversation with them we think we convinced them that there is no danger whatsoever of duplicating the efforts of another aid organization because they are just now showing up in the LaValle region. We asked them to please not come in to do an assessment, promise things they cannot deliver, and leave and never show back up. That seems to be what happens more often than not with these organizations when they have come to LaValle in the past.

I also got a request from Catholic Relief Service to publish some of these posts that I am sending to you in Nashville every day. I told them they could use my writing only if they would have someone from Catholic Relief Service contact me that I could put in touch with Fr. Guy and get a solid line of food assistance to LaValle. If we can get these two resources into the LaValle region our mission here will have been highly successful, but as you all know, since starting this whole relief effort, nothing is real until it is real. But, I am thinking these sources may indeed become sources of aid. But again, if the rest of our supplies got here, the Swiss Red Cross came through with tents, and Catholic Relief Service comes through with a food source, no one of any of these efforts will completely meet the need of the region nor will all of them together. While I am more hopeful than ever before we cannot let up on our efforts to stand close to our sister parish, St. John de Baptiste.

After our meeting with the Swiss Red Cross we finally got down to the school in Muzak. For those of you that have not seen or heard about this school that was built with the efforts of Tom Cigarran and the Cathedral parish, please know you have so much to be proud of here. It is a very nice school with a top notch computer center second to none in Haiti. The first damage immediately obvious from the earthquake was that the water cistern had fallen over and broken. The wall around the school grounds lost several feet off of the top all the way around. The back corner of the school sustained some pretty significant cracking through the walls inside and out from base to the top of the walls. But, all in all, we were pleased that the school survived as well as it did. There is much to be thankful for.

The principal wants to bring the children to the school as early as next week for outside activities. This seems a good idea on several fronts. The children need something to do to take their minds off of the earthquake and constant aftershocks. This will reacquaint them to being at school, and when they can finally get inside and back into the classroom it won't be nearly as traumatic for them. The principal says that the government has given permission for the schools to start back in March, but he wants to not start classes until all the schools in the region can start back. He says to start our school before the other children in the region will set up social problems for the children and create a group of children that will be considered elitist. It would set up an immediate problem of "haves" and "have-nots" when really no one has much. He wants to work with the Education Subcommittee of the Earthquake Committee that Fr. Guy has

put together to coordinate the actual opening of the classrooms with other schools. This all make perfect sense to me.

The school had begun construction on a second floor to add more classrooms. I will be glad when Tom Cigarran can come and evaluate this construction. The part of the first floor that sustained the most damage may not be able to support the second floor construction underway now. The water cistern is completely destroyed, so there is no water at the school at all. This is a huge problem with even trying to start the outside activities. Our visit revealed some good things and some major problems.

When we returned to the hotel the Swiss Red Cross guys were staying here. We had dinner with them and pushed our case for aid to this region. Keep these efforts in your prayers.

Tomorrow we will be going to Tuf. We are bracing ourselves for what we might find there because the pictures from there have been pretty devastating.

That is all for tonight my friends until tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation, Nashville

St. Jean Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Wednesday, February 10, 2010**

**8:27 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Wednesday's Post

February, 10, 2010

Bill, Robb, and I worked at the hotel again this morning sending out emails to loved ones, and I edited my post from yesterday from sheer embarrassment of the many typos, spelling, and grammatical errors. I apologize again to all of you that had to try to stumble through what must have seemed like incoherent rambling.

We walked to the church in hopes of meeting with Theodore the engineer/IT specialist in the area in an attempt to continuing working on Fr. Guy's Internet. I got an email from James and Erin back in the States asking for all the Internet information again. I think if Erin gets really focused on it Internet will be re-established -- or somebody will suffer the consequences. And, I mean that in only the kindest most Christian way.

We were not able to hook up with Theodore, so after lunch Fr. Guy, our translator, Bill, Robb, and I set off to look at the school and chapel in Tuf and the chapels of St. Rose of Lima in Jean Rabel, and St. Pius X. The news today was not nearly as encouraging as yesterday. The first

stop was St. Rose of Lima. As we drove up we noticed the entire top of the front wall of the church across the entire span of the church was cracked all the way through. The top of this wall is perched so precariously to the top of the building that walking anywhere near it is dangerous. The church itself sits rather close to the road, and I fear it will fall with even the slightest of aftershocks. The floor of the church was cracked all the way from one side to the other, and the right wall of the church had cracks that extended from inside to out. This chapel is not now nor will it be anywhere close to usable for a long, long time. We left the church not feeling very hopeful for what else we were to see in this region.

Next we drove to Tuf where the Church of St. Claire is used as a major part of the school for classrooms as the school itself is quite small. There is a new addition being added to the front of the school to be used as the principal's office. The concrete floor had been completed literally an hour before the earthquake hit. The date of the completion was inscribed in the concrete, January 12, 2010, while the concrete was still wet. Little did the construction workers know that they had inscribed forever in the floor a date that would never be forgotten in the history of Haiti.

Fr. Guy commented that the addition will always serve as a memorial to those that died in the earthquake. Again the prayers for the dead. I really hope this is the last time I bring these prayers from the Cathedral in Nashville to the people in LaValle.

This church too proved to give only bad news. In Haiti it is the custom that the saint that the church is named for will have a statue situated to the right of the crucifix that always hangs in the center of the church. I went to see the statue of St. Claire, for whom my mother was named. There below the shelf where the statue would have stood was the image of St. Claire broken in half. It so represented what had happened to this church. The sadness of that broken statue looking back at me was a moving and emotional moment.

There were columns in the church that had separated completely from the outer walls and could be rocked with your finger. One of them was cracked completely across the middle. The supporting beams of the church sagged precariously in the middle, and the only reason this entire structure did not fall in on itself was because the roof is wood and metal instead of concrete and masonry. It became immediately obvious to all of us that there was no good news here. There is no chance that you can put students safely back in this building in its present condition even if there were no more aftershocks. Since the church serves as a major part of the classroom space for the 200 students, I don't see how school will be able to start back here for a long, long time. We proceeded to the school building itself.

As I wrote in my post yesterday, the school at Muzak can be a source of great pride for the Cigarran family and the people of the Cathedral. The same cannot be said of the school here. This school is woefully inadequate, and it shows. The classrooms are extremely small, and two of the classrooms have been divided to make four with scrap plywood that has to also serve as the chalkboards for those classrooms. There are two classes in a space that is too small for one, and the children's benches have to be placed one against the other in order to fit in the room. I am sure there are many schools like the one in Tuf throughout Haiti, but where Muzak is our

pride, Tuf , not so much. No student should have to attend school in conditions such as these. I don't write this too all of you to embarrass or shame anyone but to let everyone know what I certainly did not know. This school was not good before the quake, and it is uninhabitable now.

As I write this post, I wonder what will become of these students. I hope we can call together a planning meeting of the current Cathedral Haiti Committee and those of you that have written me asking, "What can I do to help?" Believe me, there is a lot we can do to help here. The need for the chapel and school is so great that we need to put the best minds around this problem to help the children of Tuf.

Feeling rather dejected we left Tuf to go to see St. Pius X. I have actually already visited this chapel with Dr. Charles Renee the first week I was here. I wrote about the visit in an earlier post. St. Pius X is the chapel that is closest to the landslide that occurred during the earthquake. The landslide was from two mountains across from each other. The landslides were over 1,000 feet on each side and slid into the river below. The result was a damming of the river that forms what is now a very scenic lake. The water was cut off from the communities downstream for four days while the new lake filled up and until the water starting to flow over the new dam made of the landslide debris.

The remarkable part of this story is that there was an elderly man in his 70s and his wife of about the same age in a little wooden house at the top of one of the mountains. When the whole section of the mountain separated and slid down 1,000 feet it took this man's house with it. He and his wife were inside the house and rode the landslide all the way to the bottom. They both survived. It is truly a miracle, and I hope to share the photograph of this house at the bottom of the mountain so you can all see how incredible this survival story really is.

As we approached St. Pius X chapel the man that survived this ordeal was walking along the road. Fr. Guy stopped and introduced him to us. What a remarkable man he was. The only sign of his injuries is a bandaid on the top of his head. We asked if he would mind having his picture taken. He agreed and removed his hat and posed for Robb with such dignity and grace. This is another amazing photograph I hope to be able to share.

St. Pius X is in a very sad state as well. This building was only built in 1968, but it looks like it could be well over 100 years old. The original construction of stone and mortar was not done well and the building is crumbling of its own accord. The earthquake only made it much worse. Each of the inside walls of the church are heavily damaged. The Crucifix itself had been thrown from the wall during the quake and the Corpus of Jesus crumbled. Over in a corner the statue of the Blessed Mother was on the floor and shattered as well. The only image that withstood the quake was a photograph of St. Pius X that hangs to the right of where the Crucifix was. Again, this is the place of honor for the saint that the chapel is named after as I mentioned above.

St. Pius X chapel sits on the crest of a mountain and has the most incredible view of the surrounding mountains, but today a mist hung over the distant mountains like a shroud on an otherwise sunny day. The view matched perfectly the feelings of the day. After the caretaker of

the church brought us some fresh mandarins from their trees as a gift from his wife, we started the bumpy ride home, mostly in silence. Not much good news today.

We have enjoyed a good supper back at the hotel and tomorrow we will continue to strategize about the never ending Internet saga, how we are to get home, and do another assessment of St. Jean Baptiste Church after the 4.0 aftershock of last evening. Today has been one of those overwhelming days. The need is so great, the energy is low, and my heart is sad. So, I am off to Evening Prayer and then to bed. I look forward to another day in LaValle but am glad this one has ended. Good night my friends until tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*

Cathedral of the Incarnation

Nashville, TN

St. Jean Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Thursday, February 11, 2010; 8:34 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

Thursday Post from Haiti

February 11, 2010

This morning the plan was for us to continue working on emails and the Internet problems I mentioned in last night's post. When I went to breakfast this morning, Bill was already there and said he had been up all night with GI problems. He thought it might have been the shrimp we had for supper last night, but Rob and I ate the same thing and neither of us have these symptoms this morning. He said the GI symptoms had subsided but he felt washed out from the long night. He ate some bread and now has gone back to his room. I think he is sleeping and I will check on him in a couple of hours. If he is feeling bad again I will treat him with all the big guns I have with me to treat those things. I will spare you all the details of what those things might be.

Fr. Guy sent a driver to take us down to the church for the inspection of the church again with the local engineer, Theodore, and Robb. After every aftershock things seem to change again and another assessment needs to be done. I suggested to Robb that he go on to the church for the inspection and I will stay here at the hotel with Bill so that I can begin treating him pretty aggressively if he is not better when he wakes up.

Tiffany at the airport sent an email this morning saying that we are on the board on standby for a flight on Friday, but there is no guarantee that we will be able to get one. I am keeping Russell Brothers abreast of the situation. As you will recall his plane lost a right engine

on approach to Miami after he dropped me off two weeks ago today. His plane is now fixed and ready to fly, and he needs to pick it up anyway. If Bill is not better, I am going to pull that trigger and get him to come get us as soon as he gets down to Miami in order to get Bill home. I have learned to always have a plan for what may happen next. Bill could wake up in an hour feeling much better and all this may be for naught, but it never hurts to be prepared.

I also got an email from Tom Cigarran stating his complete disapproval of any construction moving forward on the Musac School that involves a second floor. I can't find anyone at this point who disagrees with him. There is no possibility that any student would go into a second story classroom because of the psychological trauma from experiencing the earthquake, or for that matter, sitting in a classroom under a second story. Tom also raises the good idea of making sure some of the food we have brought down could be made available for hot lunches for when the students begin to gather for outside activities at the school even before classes resume. A good meal could go a long way toward making the students feel comfortable about being at the school even if only outside. The problem of water remains at Musac since the cistern fell in the quake, and there is not water anywhere close to the school. Remember me telling you all of the wise Haitian saying that a man told me my first week here? "In Haiti behind every mountain you climb, there is another mountain to climb."

I will continue this post later. Now I should go check on Bill.

Bill slept for about three hours and got up and came over to the hotel lobby before I could go and check on him. He told me the nausea and diarrhea had not come back since late in the night. I prepared him an electrolyte filtered water solution and told him to drink it and eat a granola bar. That stayed down about 15 minutes before he was nauseated and had diarrhea again. I convinced him this was not a simple GI thing from something he ate and it was time to treat him. I have given him something for both the nausea and the diarrhea. After those were kept down he ate a little something and drank a coke. After he kept those down I started him on antibiotics to treat him for giardia or salmonella. He stayed up and seemed to feel better. At about 3:30 he went to lie back down and take a nap.

I contacted Tiffany down at the Jacmel airport and told her that I would really like to get Bill out of here as soon as possible but still no flights. Bill thinks vomiting and diarrhea might do the trick of getting our priority moved up. Tiffany's response was still no flights available at all and that I could take him down to Caya Jacmel to the clinic there for IV fluids if I thought he was becoming dehydrated.

I have access at the hospital to IV fluids and will be able to give him fluids should he not be able to hold things down tonight here. If he is able to eat supper and drink fluids when he gets up from his nap I think we will be going in the right direction. When he went to lie he was feeling better, and the two hour ride down the mountain and over to Caya Jacmel would only expose him to God knows what down there. It does not seem prudent to go to Jacmel right now.

But that option is open and I will take him immediately down there if the treatments I have started do not begin to work. I hope when he gets up from his nap, he will give me permission to tell his family that he has this GI thing or otherwise I won't be able to send this post. I don't want to alarm his family, especially now, but I don't want to not tell Tracie his wife that he is sick either.

Robb came back from the assessment of St. Jean Baptiste and his report was not good. Apparently the aftershock of the day before yesterday further stressed one of the supporting columns in the church. Steel support poles need to go in pretty quickly to prevent further damage. Robb also discovered that what I thought were old marks on the walls from vines that had grown up from the outside were actually termite tracks. So, now wit needs to be determined if the old tracks are old because some treatment was made, or are there termites eating the wooden roof supports? Fr. Guy has replaced the roof in the past year and said he replaced any rotten wood that was up there then. We are keeping our fingers crossed that some sort of treatment was done for termites at the same time.

My plan for the rest of today is to stay here and monitor Bill's progress and keep working on a way out of here. It is 4:15pm I will continue this post later.

It is 8:30pm. When Bill got up from his nap he felt a lot better. He was able to eat a few bites of rice and two French fries at supper and everything stayed down. This little bit of food is actually plenty in view of what he has been through over the past 24 hours. He was also able to drink plenty of water and keep it down. He has had two doses of the antibiotics, and the medicines for his symptoms have worked also. If all continues as planned there will be no need for IV fluids. Since he felt better I told him he needed to let Tracie his wife know he was sick. He said he sent her an email this morning and told her. She commented back the Carter GI system is not known for its strength and stamina. I told him to email her back and tell her to read this post. Everyone in Nashville including her will know more about Bill's GI tract by the end of this post than they ever hoped to know. Does anyone know if I have violated in HIPPA regulations today?

On a serious note, I am so glad Bill is feeling better and I hope he continues to improve. It is so good when a plan comes together these days even if it is only a plan involving an overactive GI tract. It is the small things in life that can make me happiest!

Tonight Michelange, who works for Fr. Guy, came by the hotel to tell me he finally got his bad tooth pulled. He has been suffering with this bad tooth for a long time. I paid for the dentist to take care of it, but something seemed to always get in the way of him finally getting it pulled, I think being a little afraid of the dentist as much as anything else. Tonight he is so proud that he finally went and had it done because he feels so much better, and I have been hassling him every day. As a reward I gave him the last tarp we brought from Nashville and the mosquito net I had brought for myself. Along with a tent he got from James and Erin, he his mother and two younger brothers are now in "tall cotton" as we say in the South. He was so happy. He

thanked me over and over and told me I was a good man. I know this thank you is sincere and from his heart, and so he touched mine.

Michelang also told me tonight that he was going to be able to study in University because of the assistance of the Brothers that run the school down the road where the soccer field is and where we had Mass last Sunday. I can't figure out if he has agreed to enter formation for this order or if Fr. Guy has made some arrangement for him to be educated by this order of Brothers. Either way, he says he will be able to study at the university level and still take care of his mother and three younger brothers. I am very, very happy to hear this because this young man has a great mind and it would be a shame for him not to be educated at the university level.

All in all it has ended up being a very good day. We still don't know how we are getting out of here and will work more on that tomorrow, but I don't feel quite so pressed to get us out of here as soon as possible with Bill feeling better tonight. I pray tomorrow his health will continue to improve and we can find a way home soon. Good night my friends until tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation  
Nashville, TN  
St. Jean Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Friday, February 12, 2010; 3:14 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed)

Ed: Not wanting to alarm Bill and Robb, but we have been on standby at Jacmel airport for three days. I am exploring Mission Aviation Fellowship and a medical team in Cara Jacmel leaving tomorrow but nothing so far. Russell can come get us next Wednesday if nothing by then. Nothing out of Port au Prince either. Just FYI. Stranded for now. – Jim

(Return Email to Deacon Jim from Fr. Ed)

Jim: I don't want to alarm *you*, but we're out of money, at least the sum Russell needs. If he becomes the only option home, take it, and tell Russell we will have to pay him later. We can have a second collection or two to raise the necessary funds to pay him. I think the Cathedral folks would be happy to donate to get you home.....or at least I think they would! - Ed

**Friday, February 12, 2010; 8:01 p.m.**

**LaValle, Haiti**

(Email)

## Friday Post from Haiti

Today is the one month anniversary of the earthquake. Today begins a three day period of mourning and prayer throughout all of Haiti. The staff of the hotel had the Prayer Service from Port au Prince Haiti on the speaker system at the hotel this morning. Fr. Guy brought Michelange and the translator from the church to join us for midmorning tea which they had brought from the church.

Because of these posts all of you back home know more about Bill Carter's intestines than you ever hoped to know. Well evidently the same is true here but not because of me. The whole region of LaValle somehow knows Bill was sick yesterday, so the cook at the church made a sort of medicinal tea and sent it to Bill to make him feel better. Everybody we ran into today asked Bill how he was feeling. The communication system around here is amazing considering most of the time there is neither electricity nor Internet.

As we sat in the hospital lobby we listened to an Auxiliary Bishop of Port au Prince broadcast prayers for the injured, the dead, and those suffering from grief and distress on the radio across the country. Even though it was in Creole, the prayer was beautiful to hear, and the Haitians listened to it spellbound. After the prayer a choir from Port au Prince began to sing one of my favorite hymns. They sang in Creole, but the words to the song came to my heart immediately in English.

*O Lord, My God,  
When I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the world thy hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.  
Then sing my soul my Saviour God to thee.  
How great thou art!  
How great thou art!*

I have never been more moved by the beautiful words to this song than the way the people of Haiti prayed these powerful words on this day.

After the national broadcast of the Prayer Service was over we sat down with Fr. Guy to give him a report of our assessment of the church, the rectory, two of the chapels, and the three schools: Musac, LaVoute, and Tuf. As I mentioned in my post from Wednesday these reports were not at all good news. We explained that LaVoute school was perhaps the best of the bunch, and that after some repairs the school buildings would be usable pretty quickly; however, the chapel there should not be used until some significant support was added to the middle cross beam over the main aisle. Since we met with the students and parents in this chapel on

Wednesday, there seemed to be some surprise that the chapel as it stands was not completely safe. Even at that it was in the best shape of anything else we visited.

Next we discussed the chapel of St. Rose of Lima and reported that it was not safe to even stand close to and should be closed until earthquake specialists could inspect it and not to expect good news then. The next report was the chapel of St. Pius X. This is the building that was built in 1968 of such poor quality mortar that it sustained heavy damage to the inside. None of us felt qualified to say this chapel would not last another ten years just from natural elements, but I think this is most probably the case. The mortar mixture in the building seems to have been mixed with too much ground up limestone and not enough sand and cement. If you run your hand between the stones it just crumbles.

We reported that the chapel at the school in Tuf was twisting in upon itself and that the front wall of the chapel would soon fall. We were pretty absolute here and told Fr. Guy not to put children in this building under any circumstance. To remind you, this chapel serves as a major part of the classroom space for the school.

The conversation turned to the dire need for large tents as a temporary solution to get the children back in school. The school building itself cannot possibly hold the 200 students that attend school there, and there will be many more that will need to attend that have migrated into the area from Port au Prince and Jacmel. Fr. Guy made the comment to us, not through the translator but in his own English, "I am very sad." My dear friend, so am I.

Then the discussion moved to the crown jewel of the schools, Musac. This is where the water tower collapsed so there is no water, and where the new second story construction now sits where the most amount of damage was sustained on the first floor. We told Fr. Guy that the second floor had to come down. Its construction was not of the quality that could be safely used by the students and teachers. Neither Tom Cigarran nor the Cathedral of the Incarnation parish could support its completion in light of the earthquake. The completion of a potential disaster really makes no sense right now. Fr. Guy said that Theodore, the local engineer, said that it would be just fine and that we should complete this second floor construction. I explained to him that it wasn't just that the walls on the second floor might collapse with another earthquake, but that the ceiling of the first floor which would become the floor on the second had cracks, and that none of it was safe. Finally, we just told Fr. Guy that we had no intention of telling him when schools could open or who could attend, but that this issue was simply not negotiable. We simply cannot attach our names, resources, and responsibility to the school any longer if the construction of the second story continued. This was not negotiable. Expansion of the school could certainly be supported if the school is spread out with only one story; we cannot support a second floor with a good conscience. We asked him to even think of making a quadrangle from the three sides of the school already in place on the first floor, just no second stories.

I really hated that we had to be this firm and blunt about this because we have tried very hard not to come in here being paternal and imperialistic. We realize that Fr. Guy and the people of LaValle need to plot out and have complete ownership of their future after this catastrophe.

On every issue we have given our opinions and left the final decision making to Fr. Guy, the elders of the community, and the Earthquake Disaster Committee made up of the community leaders, but here we had to insist that for the lives and safety of the children we cannot financially support a second floor on the school building in Musac. I hate drawing this line in the sand. Fr. Guy has enough on him right now without having to fight this battle with the locals. Please pray for him.

The conversation moved to the vision for the improvements at Musac. Fr. Guy wants to continue moving forward in completing the science labs for chemistry, physics and biology so that they would match the quality of the computer lab already in place at the school. We all agreed this is indeed a worthy goal. Fr. Guy explained to us how difficult the sciences were for the students because they were never able to be shown the experiments that go with the theory of the sciences. Remembering my own biology, anatomy and physiology, and chemistry labs in high school and college, I wonder how the students can even begin to grasp these subjects without the labs that go with them. I don't ever think I would ever have ended up in the medical field without the basics that I learned at Father Ryan High School in the sciences.

Fr. Guy would like for us to consider setting up a scholarship for Michelange so that he could come to the states and learn enough to become a lab assistant to the professors who teach computer science, chemistry, physics, and biology. What a marvelous investment this would be for someone-anyone-to take on. Michelange is certainly intelligent enough and motivated enough to learn at this level and to teach the children of the LaValle region. I'm just throwing this out there for any of you who might be interested in working on that.

Fr. Guy had to end our meeting because he had another at the church, and another at the Brothers' school, and more planning and distributions have to be done. He invited us to join him at the rectory for lunch after his next meeting.

When we arrived at the rectory his meeting was still going on in the courtyard of the church but was ending with prayer for the earthquake victims. As we approached the back porch of the rectory we were surprised that the supporting column that holds up the ceiling of the porch and a good part of the back of the second floor has a crack that has progressed from small to now a large part of the concrete having fallen away. The rebar underneath the concrete is showing through. The rebar is in the column going up and down the same direction the column is standing. What we can see is that this rebar was never meant to support the weight of the building but more to hold the concrete together. The rebar supported concrete is the weight bearer. Now a big chunk of that concrete is gone, and the rebar itself is bending from the weight. More bad news! Does anyone have any of those steel posts that we shored up our basements with? Fr. Guy sure could use some of those about now if he is going to save major parts of the church and the rectory. Alarmed at this new development we sat down for lunch. The cook came and asked Bill if her medicinal tea had made him feel better. He said that it certainly had. We didn't tell her that Cipro Flagyl, Reglan, and Lomotil might have had something to do with the turn around in his health. We are all just thankful he is feeling normal again.

Back at the hotel after lunch we had to strategize about leaving Haiti. We have been on a waiting list for a flight back to the States at the Jacmel airport for three days and haven't heard anything back from when that might happen. Today we contacted Mission Aviation Fellowship and put out a request for a flight through them to the Dominican Republic. Dr. Rene has put us in touch with a doctor in Jacmel who is working with a Protestant pastor that has been successful in getting missionaries in and out of the country. We also still have the option of hiring Russell Brothers, the pilot of the 1961 Beech cargo plane that flew me down here 15 days ago. Russell will be available next Wednesday. Our plan is to keep all of these options open until something comes through. I miss my home, I miss my sweet dog Henry, and I miss all of you. I am hoping something will come through soon. Until then remember me in your prayers. I will write again tomorrow.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation  
Nashville, TN  
St. Jean Baptiste, LaValle, Haiti

**Saturday, February 13, 2010; 5:01 p.m**

**Nashville**

(Text from Fr. Ed to Deacon Jim)

I'm in the Confessional but without any business. My thoughts have wandered to you and the Haiti crew. Please know that I'm thinking of you all and will be praying that you get a flight home.

Please tell Fr. Guy that I pray for him and my sisters and brothers at St. Jean B. every day and sometimes many times a day.

We are gathering even more supplies to send. I have asked Suz [Susanne Southworth] to begin every Rel Ed class by having our children pray for Fr. Guy's children. God listens to children, so I know the prayers of our students will help his students!

**FINAL**

**Received Sunday, February 14, 2010; 3:00 p.m.**

**Friday February 13, 2010;**

**Posts from Haiti/Santa Domingo/Atlanta**

Last night I talked to Tiffany at the Jacmel airport trying again to arrange a flight for us out of Jacmel to anywhere we might be able to pick up a commercial flight. Tiffany said there

were a couple of flights she knew about that possibly could take us but that I should call her this morning. I woke up at 6:30 a.m. as usual, which is truly amazing since our friendly neighborhood dog barked from 9:30pm to 11:00pm. I joined Bill and Robb at the hotel lobby for breakfast and called Tiffany at 8:00 a.m. Tiffany said two flights were leaving in ten minutes. Oh great! We were not packed and at least an hour and half away. Tiffany said she thought these flights were going to the Dominican Republic and returning right back and perhaps we could leave on them when they returned. She estimated that time to be about three hours from when I was talking to her. I told her we would be at the airport as soon as we could get there. I asked one of the ladies who worked the hotel to lend me their cell phone so that I could call Fr. Guy at the church. Father Guy answered and understood that we needed to get to the airport in Jacmel and agreed to get the Brother's car to take us. We like that car because it is air conditioned, which they rarely use, but the white people that never get cold and always seem to be hot love the air conditioning.

I rushed back to my room and realized I still had a big box of medicines that needed to be dealt with and about 20 military meals. I started packing as quickly as I could and was soon in a full sweat. I had only partially packed when Fr. Guy knocked on the door ready to pick us up. This has to be the first time anyone in Haiti has even been close to being on time, and of course I wasn't near ready. Bill Carter helped me finish packing. We headed over to the hotel to check out. I had with me all the clothes that Erin and James had left along with some camping dishes, a Titans hat, a sleeping bag, and a few other things that I wanted to give Rosa Lar and the staff at the hotel. They rummaged through the things and had them distributed within one minute. I gave tips to all of them, settled the bill, and loaded our things into the truck. Fr. Guy pulled out of the hotel parking lot. I thought we would have plenty of time to get to Jacmel before the flights that had left would return from the Dominican Republic. When we approached the church Fr. Guy turned into the compound. Uh oh! Why were we going to the church? Fr. Guy had hastily called together most of the main members of the Earthquake Planning Committee including the Mayor, Theodore the engineer, the man in charge of distribution of the food and tents, the Principal from the school at Musac, and others. Fr. Guy had every intention of having a big meal and a long meeting with this committee before we left. I was so sorry to have to explain that we really could not eat lunch or meet with the Committee for fear we would miss our flight... should one even materialize once we got down to Jacmel.

Haitian goodbyes are long and emotional, so we were probably at the church for another 45 minutes just saying goodbye and making arrangements for letters and reports to be sent back and forth from the various subcommittees and friends we have met during our visit here.

The friends I have met are many. After spending 17 days here, helping medically and spiritually, so many of these people have become close to me in ways I really never imagined would or could happen. They are such a wonderful Spirit-filled people doing the best they have with the cards they have been dealt with intelligence, grace and dignity. I have learned so much more from them than they will ever know and will consider all of them to be my friends forever.

It is often spoken of how those you have been through the most difficult times with often form bonds of friendship and love that are never forgotten. I am feeling that very thing to the depths of my soul and look forward to the day when I see these friends again. It is so easy for me to see how Tom Cigarran and the people of the Cathedral parish have become dedicated to these people for a lifetime.

We finally were able to get our goodbyes said at the church, so Fr. Guy, the translator, Michelange, Bill, Robb, and I piled into the cab of the truck and left LaValle for the trip down the mountain. My feelings are mixed as I am sad to be leaving but happy to be heading home. The trip down the mountain is as bumpy as ever but as comfortable as possible in the air-conditioned cab of the truck that belongs to the Brothers. The view coming down the mountain is breathtaking. We pass Musac and LaVout then the parish where Father Gaston is now pastor as we make our way down to Jacmel. As we cross the river at the bottom of the mountain, I see men bathing in the cool water near the bridge, not in the least concerned about their nakedness.

While Jacmel does not seem as hectic and crowded as when I first drove through 17 days ago, the damage to the many buildings looks as though the earthquake just happened. There is no sign that any cleanup from the quake has begun except where buildings had actually fallen into the streets. There are signs of death and destruction everywhere. The ride through Jacmel to the airport is depressing.

When we arrive at the airport the Canadian military manning the gate tell me that Fr. Guy can drive us just inside the gate and will have to drop us off and then leave. This is different than when I arrived and Fr. Guy was allowed to move freely around the grounds of the airport. Fr. Guy stopped the truck inside the airport grounds, and another long Haitian goodbye ensued. I told Fr. Guy that he must be glad that “the Deacon” is finally getting out of his hair. He said, “En contraire mon ami” (Quite the opposite my friend). He tells me in English how very much he appreciates my coming and offering the people of LaValle much needed assistance. He also thanks me for bringing him peace. Those words make everything I have done over the last 17 days worth it. I cannot begin to express how much I admire this man. He will always be my hero as a holy man of God, as a leader to those most in need, and as a friend. I can only hope to obtain in a lifetime of work for the church what I have seen from Pere Guy Domond in 17 days. I have been forever touched by this man coming into my life. We embraced warmly, and I said, “Goodbye, my friend, goodbye.”

After having the Haitian authorities search my bags and registering my passport, I went to find Tiffany and her assistant Ruth to check on the status of a flight—any flight—out of Jacmel. Tiffany had escorted some new arrivals off of the airport grounds, so I found Ruth. Ruth told me there were no flights available today but that my name was on the board for a flight out and I should wait inside with the others who were waiting. There were 7 other Americans waiting in this small alcove using their backpacks as pillows. When I asked how long they had been waiting they told me since yesterday. I did not have the heart to tell Bill and Robb. They had found the Canadian commander of the post there at the airport and were talking military and

aviation stuff with him. I found Tiffany when she returned back onto the airport grounds, and I told her I had seen on the Internet the night before a picture of her, Angelina Jolie, and as many of the Canadian military as could get close to Angelina in a picture. She said that Angelina had come yesterday, and she laughed that her picture was all over the Internet. Angelina showing up in Jacmel is really better news than it sounds because it indicates that the attention is shifting from only Port au Prince to the other cities and outlying areas. This can only be good news. I am glad she was here yesterday.

Tiffany tells me there were two flights that went to the Dominican Republic and she thought at least one of them was coming back to Jacmel, and maybe we could get on that flight because there were only three of us and the plane was small. The others that were waiting needed to all go together and were hoping to fly to the Bahamas. I told Tiffany we would go anywhere a plane would take us. She said she would let me know when she knew, so I settled down for what I was sure would be a long, long wait. I still had not told Bill and Robb that the possibilities of getting a flight seemed to be diminishing by the moment, but it was clear to me that physically being at the airport was a whole lot better than just being on the board and waiting for a call an hour and a half away.

As Bill and Robb finished talking to the commanding officer, Ruth came and told me that a small plane was landing that could hold 3 people and that I should go out on the runway and talk to the pilot. I was happy to do that. The pilot is an evangelical pastor from Laredo, Texas. His wife was a nurse and his church was financing both him coming to help out in the crisis as a pilot and his wife doing medical mission work down in Caya Jacmel. I told him what my mission had been and all that we had brought and done. He told me he would be honored to fly us to an airport close to Santa Domingo in the Dominican Republic. I asked him if there would be taxi service from that airport to the commercial airport in Santa Domingo and he said yes. I asked him when he would be leaving. He said, "In 5 minutes." Great! I'll be right back!

I went back into the airport building and told Bill and Robb, "Let's go! We've got a plane to somewhere close to Santa Domingo in the Dominican Republic." Bill looked at me and said, "What do you mean somewhere close?" Oh, about a 50 minute taxi ride to the International Airport. The other missionaries that had been waiting since yesterday did not look at all happy and I felt badly for leaving in front of them...for about a half a second. Leaving first was the luck of the draw. They needed to travel all together, and they needed to go through the Bahamas. We were only three and we were going to Santa Domingo. I tried not to look at their faces as we went out to the plane.

As we walked out to the plane, I told Bill and Robb that I really had no idea what this might cost us, but it couldn't be much, could it?!?! The guy is a pastor and doing mission work right? When we arrived at the plane, I asked the pilot if we could donate toward the fuel for the flight. He said that wasn't necessary but would certainly be appreciated.

Robb had been on the Internet before we left the hotel and had identified a flight on Delta at 3:30pm at the Santa Domingo International airport direct to Atlanta. We are beginning to

wonder if we could possibly make it from Jacmel to Isabela airport in the Dominican Republic, through customs, out to a taxi, to the airport in Santa Domingo, through security, through customs again, in time for a flight. It is 1:00 p.m. as we get on the plane. Could we possibly make this? Naaaah.

I am remembering the great hotel that James, Erin, Russell Brothers, and I stayed in before we got to Haiti at the beginning of this trip. Hot showers, good food, a nice bottle of wine, not the worse thing that could happen tonight should we miss the 3:30 flight to Atlanta.

As taxi down the runway the pilot said the flight is about a 50 minute flight from Jacmel, and that he is going to this particular airport at Isabela because he needed to get his brakes fixed.... *I'm sorry did you say you needed to get your brakes fixed?!?!?* "Yea," he says, "one of them is not working." *And so when we land how exactly is it that you get the plane stopped?* He didn't answer instead just laughed and laughed.

The plane was a twin engine Cessna with two seats for the three of us. Robb is a pilot so it made sense for him to take the co-pilot seat. Bill told me to take the one seat in the back, and he positioned himself on my backpack that was filled mostly with clothes that I will probably just burn when I get home. This plane even has air vents to keep fresh air flowing throughout the cabin during flight. Since it is 93 degrees as we are leaving Jacmel this was feeling like a luxury flight. The takeoff was perfect for the 50 minute flight to Isabela.

Robb and the pilot were both wearing headsets, so they were talking throughout the flight about flying and planes. Robb told us later that about ten minutes into the flight the pilot pastor asked him the big evangelical question, "So how long have you been saved?" Robb never did tell us how he answered that one. As Catholics we believe that salvation comes to us with the grace of Baptism. Robb was raised Lutheran and came into the Catholic Church in 2005 through the RCIA at the Cathedral. I don't know how he answered, but I do know Robb is a good Catholic man with a natural wisdom for Catholic spirituality that far surpasses the number of years he has been Catholic.

We arrive at Isabela airport and are escorted to the terminal to the customs and immigration gate. Forms have to be filled out, and we are instructed to stand behind a yellow line. There are two agents sitting in the passport booth but they never call us up. Finally they ask us if we speak Spanish. I tell them not really, and they tell us in part Spanish and part English that they need the flight documentation from the pilot. We don't have a clue where he is, but his probably down close to where the planes are worked on. I try to explain that we are trying to make a flight at 3:30 at the Santa Domingo airport and that we really need to get moving. Bill Carter makes this issue much more clear than I do, and they finally check our passports and let us through.

Of course one of the airport workers escorts us the 50 feet from the passport and customs area out to the taxi stand. Not because we needed assistance to get there but in hopes of getting a tip. The taxi stand worker tells us that the fare will be \$50.00. That sounds steep to us, so he shows us a piece of paper that is laminated with the fare typed on it. I guess that we are supposed

to be more convinced of the legitimacy of the fare because of this paper. What choice do we have now? We climb in the taxi and go.

As it turns out the price was very reasonable because we had to go through the heart of the city in bumper to bumper traffic. Driving through Santa Domingo reminds me of driving through Beijing. The lines in the road have no meaning. There are no speed limits. The stop signs are apparently only decorative street art, and traffic lights must be left over Christmas decorations as no one looks at them much less obeys them. After a hair raising 50 minute drive we arrived at the airport at 2:30 p.m. Could it be we would make this 3:30pm flight to Atlanta? Then I remembered something about a time change between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. So when we reached the Delta ticket counter, I asked, “Que hora est?” The man rolled is eyes at me and said in English it’s 3:30 p.m. There was an hour difference, and it was not in our favor.

The agent at the ticket counter said that because of an ice storm in Atlanta the flight was delayed for 3 hours and that we could indeed get on it. We asked about a connection to Nashville from Atlanta and he said that was impossible.

We talked it over and decided that Atlanta was closer than Santa Domingo and decided to take the flight. Robb tried to use his Delta travel miles to get us a discount, but they said he couldn’t use them for the flight but perhaps they could give us an upgrade to first class at the gate depending on how the flight filled up between now and departure. After we paid for the tickets we had two hours to get through security and customs. Getting through did not take as long as we thought and that gave us an opportunity to grab some lunch close to the gate.

I called Nashville and had everybody there start working on flights and or a rental car from Atlanta to Nashville. Robb called his company travel agent who told him because of the weather situation in Atlanta, and all of the air traffic delays, there were no rental cars in Atlanta. I am reminded again of the wise Haitian saying, “Behind every mountain you cross there is another mountain.”

There is another layer of security at the gate area itself. This involved a search of my carryon, passport inspection, boarding pass, and a pat down. Thank God that the only thing left in my clothes after all of this time in Haiti that was clean was my clergy shirt and collar, which I wore for the trip home. In my bag was a small bottle of Holy Water that I had brought from the Cathedral’s baptismal font to use for blessings of graves in Haiti. These ended up never being actual graves but collapsed buildings with bodies still inside. The security person came across the bottle and said, “Oh su padre?” Not knowing how to even begin explaining what a deacon was in Spanish, I responded, “Si mi padre.” And he let us through to the gate. Bless me Father for I have sinned.....

I write this post on the 3 and half hour flight to Atlanta. There are no flights and no cars for tonight so we will be trying tomorrow to rent a car and drive the final leg home in the morning. Robb did get us all upgraded to First Class for this flight, and believe it or not, this is the first time in my life I have ever flown first class, and I travel a lot and to many places around the world. I could really get used to this. As I look out my window and see lights I am so happy

that I am looking down on the good old United States somewhere. I will hopefully be home when I send this final post from Haiti.

I am sincerely grateful to all of you who have been on this journey with me by reading and sharing these daily posts. I have heard by email from people all across the country as you have shared them with friends and family who also share them with friends and family. But I am especially thankful for your prayers, for it is your prayers that have sustained me. Good night my friends until I see you all again.

*Deacon Jim McKenzie*  
Cathedral of the Incarnation  
Nashville, TN

**Sunday, February 14, 2010; 11:20 a.m.**

**Tennessee**

(Phone call from Deacon Jim to Fr. Ed from Monteagle, Tennessee!)

Jim called as he, Bill Carter, and Robb Anderson crossed over Monteagle on their way home. Jim explained that because of all the snow and closed airports in the U.S. they could not get a flight home from Atlanta. Rental cars were scarce because stranded travelers were renting cars to drive home. The group was told that cars could only be rented for local use and no more cars could be driving out of state. According to Jim, Robb told the company that they needed a car just for local driving. With eyes raised, Jim and Bill listened to Robb. Robb explained to them later that he regarding driving to Nashville as local driving. By Noon Jim was at his house.

I called Jim at home at 6:30 this evening. I felt badly because he was napping on his couch with his dog sleeping on his feet! I reminded him that tomorrow is Presidents' Day and thus the office is closed. By my orders he was to stay home, rest, and enjoy the comforts of home. We will debrief later in the week. Jim told me he is already thinking about the next trip!

I had spoken with James McKenzie, Jim's son, after his and Erin's return home. All James could talk about was the need to get back to Haiti and finish the work he, his father, and Erin had started.

Being concerned about Jim, James, and Erin, I have constantly asked about their emotional and spiritual states. There is no trauma. The people of Haiti, despite their tragedy, grief, and hardship, are filled with love for God. The three of them have clearly been moved by the love and faith of the Haitian people.

At one point Jim had shared that he had asked Fr. Guy how the people could be so filled with faith despite everything. How could they believe God was with them? Fr. Guy responded, "Jim, they know God is here because you are here! As long as you and the people of the Cathedral keep helping us the people know God has not forgotten them." I asked Jim his

impression of the people he encountered in all of the towns, villages, churches, schools and hospitals. Jim told me, “Someone forgot to tell me that God is everywhere in Haiti!”

I look forward to Jim’s chance to edit these posts and offer his reflections and further memories.