

# Haiti Homily - Deacon Rodrigue Mortel

On behalf of the Haitian people I want first to thank Archbishop O' Brien for remembering Haiti in such a special way with the sacrifice of the mass, our highest form of prayer. Being invited by the Archbishop to deliver the homily on this unique occasion is for me a very high honor for which I am extremely grateful. Nonetheless this is very intimidating to say the least. So, I will let my heart speak and let us hear what comes out.

It has been only four (4) weeks since I completed my fifth trip to Haiti following the powerful earthquake that devastated the country a year ago today. Tears have not stopped flowing. Hearts have not stopped bleeding at the memory of the unprecedented number of human life losses, the massive destruction of properties, the unthinkable level of physical suffering and the unimaginable mental anguish of the population. During these long 12 months, like the day after the tragedy the questions and reflections remain the same:

Why? What did Haitians do to deserve this catastrophic event? Why do bad things happen to innocent people?

These are pertinent questions which cry out for reasonable answers. Unfortunately there are many theories but no answer. However the passage of the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 2:14-18) we just heard gave us some insight and consolation. The incarnate God made of blood and flesh is our brother. He suffered himself and he shares in our suffering. Of course, things happen that don't make sense or don't seem right to us. But being only humans we are incapable of understanding the fullness of the universe. God is in control. He has the whole world including the Haitian people in his hands and as Christians we need to trust him and surrender totally to the sovereignty of his will. The question though that is more relevant is not why but what do we do when tragedy hits and bad things happen to good people? How do we respond? Again we find the sacred scriptures very resourceful (MK 1:37-39). Like Peter told Jesus in today's gospel passage, we come to church with a broken heart, sit in front of the tabernacle and tell Jesus "Everyone is looking for

you.

- The souls of the 300,000 people who died this day a year ago are waiting to see your face.
- The 300,000 amputees, crippled, paralytics are outside the door waiting for you to come out and command them to get up and walk
- The 1 million people who after 1 year still living in flimsy tents are waiting to be covered and protected by your divine mantle
- The millions of mentally traumatized are outside waiting to touch you and be healed
- The thousands of individuals separated by death from their love ones have been waiting for your comforting words.

Lord, every Haitian in Haiti and abroad is camping outside, praying for your intervention, and patiently waiting for you to graft a little piece of Heaven to the heart of the leaders of that country.

We also need to be ready to receive the same message that Peter in the gospel passage heard from our Lord and to carry it out. Acknowledge that God is in charge, invoke his name, and sing his praise. Put trust in his wisdom and power. Proclaim the good news by assisting all victims in whatever form. After all, God is the one who created the world. He is the only one who understands it completely.

My friends, this tragedy like 9/11 and the tsunami teaches a lesson to each one of us left behind. The earthquake hit Haiti at 4:53 p.m. on January 12, 2010. At 4:52 p.m. that day, none of the 300,000 people who died had any idea any sign that they were going to be called back home by their Father 1 minute later. That lesson we keep learning it again and again: Be prepared.