

Prayers for Haiti

For those present Jan. 12 at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen(see Page 8), Deacon Rod Mortel's homily on the tragedy that continues to unveil in his native Haiti one year after a devastating earthquake rocked the island nation, was, I hope, as moving for them as it was for me.

For those who were not able to attend, the powerful witness Dr. Mortel offers of the human suffering and need for prayers among the people of Haiti unfolds in his homily text that follows.

May each of us continue to remember in prayer our suffering sisters and brothers in Haiti.

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 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."

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