

EXTREME NEEDS, FEW RESOURCES

Haitian Priests, Nuns Carry Heavy Burden

In these troubled times, Haiti's priests have become more than spiritual leaders to the poor — they have become the difference between life and death for those in greatest need.

With no place else to turn, desperate families come to their local priest to beg for food, medical supplies and other basic human needs. And, at least for a time, they find blessed relief.

"There's no doubt about it. The priests who serve Haiti's poor are literally a life line to many suffering people. In the spirit of Matthew 25:31-46, the clergy are feeding the starving, clothing the naked and comforting the forgotten and desperate. I can't imagine what these poor families would do without the help of these dedicated priests, pastors and nuns," said Ferdinand Mahfood, founder of Food For The Poor. For nearly 15 years, Food For The Poor has served as a resource to the clergy in Haiti who work among the poor. The organization supplies food, medical items and other relief supplies to priests, pastors and nuns who then distribute the aid in their local communities.

Since its inception in 1982, Food For The Poor has supplied more than 6,500 trailer loads of goods to the clergy and the poor of the Caribbean. The value of those items exceeds \$250 million.

"For nearly 15 years, this program has worked very efficiently, but it's under tremendous pressure today," Mahfood added. "Soaring unemployment and escalating health problems are having a devastating impact on the poor. What can the local priests and nuns do? Should they turn these suffering people away?"

Mahfood would rather see Haiti's priests receive more support, particularly from American Catholics. To that end, he and Food For The Poor are appealing for help from Catholics nationwide. The funds collected will be used to provide additional goods, supplies and services for all nine dioceses within Haiti.

"Our goal is to offer Haiti's nuns and priests more resources — whatever they need to lighten their burdens and allow them to better serve the poor," he explained. "These dedicated men and women are in the trenches, fighting for the poor, and they need our support."

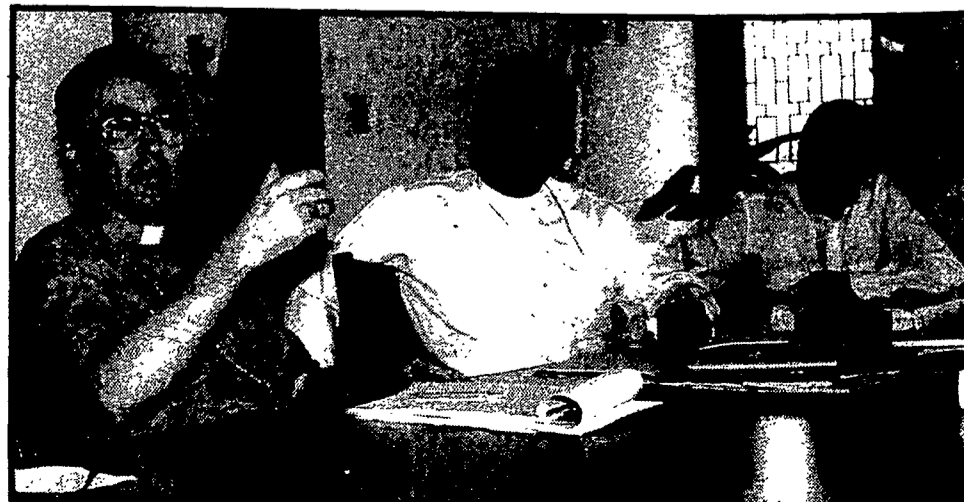
Will You Help?

Please give generously. Send your tax-deductible contributions to: Food For The Poor, Proj # 15267, 550 SW 12 Avenue, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442. Designate contributions by writing "Haiti Fund — Proj # 15267" on the "note" or "memo" line of the check or money order.



(AT LEFT) Pope John Paul II discusses his concerns about poverty in the Caribbean region with Food For The Poor's founder, Ferdinand Mahfood. For Mahfood's work among the poor, Pope John Paul II recognized him as a Knight of St. Gregory — the highest honor available to a Catholic layman.

(BELOW) During a recent meeting with the Bishops of Haiti, the urgent needs of the country's poor became an emotional topic of conversation. Since they have few resources to help the suffering and needy of Haiti, the Bishops decided to seek help from America and other First World countries. Their appeal for help is contained in an open letter reprinted above.



CONFERENCE EPISCOPALE D'HAITI

No. C.E.H. :67/96

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ:

On behalf of Haiti's suffering poor, we urgently seek assistance from you, our American brothers and sisters in Christ. Our country's families are in desperate need, and we fear that even greater difficulties lay ahead.

Dramatic conflicts taking place in other parts of the world have drawn many social and relief organizations away from our country, yet Haiti's overwhelming needs persist.

As the Archbishops and Bishops of the nine dioceses of Haiti, we are now compelled to carry our broken poor to you, appealing to you for help. We ask you to hear, with us, their cries for help. We ask you to see, in their faces, our suffering Lord. With you, our heart breaks for them, but we are unable to do enough. Haiti is destitute, and we lack the resources to meet their needs without your help. To serve the poorest of the poor, we have forged a special partnership with FOOD FOR THE POOR, a Christ-Centered organization that has been consistent in its commitment to Haiti and her people. By responding to FOOD FOR THE POOR'S appeals for Haiti, you will be empowering us to provide the food, medical supplies and other resources our people so desperately need.

Please pray for us, for Haiti and her poor. Seize this moment to glorify God by responding to Haiti's needs with Christ-like compassion and mercy. We ask for your help in his Holy Name.

+ Mgr. Hubert CONSTANT OMI
Bishop of Fort-Liberte
Vice-President of C.E.H.

+ Mgr. François GAYOT SMM
Archbishop of Cap-Haitien
President of C.E.H.

+ Mgr. Louis KEBREAU SDB
Auxiliary Bishop of Port-au-Prince
Secretary-General of C.E.H.

+ Mgr. François W. LIGONDE
Archbishop of Port-au-Prince.

+ Mgr. Joseph LAFONTANT
Apostolic Administrator of the
Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince.

+ Mgr. Emmanuel CONSTANT
Bishop of Gonaives.

+ Mgr. Leonard P. LAROCHE
Bishop of Hinche.

+ Mgr. Frantz COLIMON SMM
Bishop of Port-de-Paix.

+ Mgr. Willy ROMELUS
Bishop of Jeremie.

+ Mgr. Alix VERRIER
Bishop of Les Cayes.

+ Mgr. Guy POULARD
Bishop of Jacmel.

