

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

# HAITIAN BISHOPS PLEAD WITH AMERICAN CATHOLICS TO HELP HAITI'S SUFFERING POOR

By Craig Cole  
Special to The Catholic Courier

In an emotional letter to American Catholics (see opposite page), the Archbishops and Bishops of Haiti have asked for help on behalf of their troubled country's suffering poor.

"We are now compelled to carry our broken poor to you, appealing to you for help," they write. "We ask you to hear, with us, [the poor's] cries for help....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."

Members of the group recently shared their concerns and needs directly with Food For The Poor's founder, Ferdinand Mahfood. Food For The Poor has been active in providing relief to Haiti's poor for nearly 15 years, and the organization remains committed to helping the needy through the clergy and the church. At that meeting, held in Port-au-Prince, Mahfood agreed to help the Bishops by communicating their needs to American Catholics. He also committed Food For The Poor and its

resources. Food For The Poor will acquire and ship the specific items the Bishops are requesting.

"I understand the intense pain these Bishops feel," Mahfood said after the meeting. "I've walked in the slums and seen the horrible shacks the poor call home. I've listened to tearful parents tell me how a son or daughter died because the family couldn't afford to fill a \$10 prescription. I've seen hundreds of children with their bellies distended from malnutrition. I've looked into the frightened eyes of young people who feel their future is empty hopelessness. And because I know what these Bishops are confronted with, I can't refuse their plea for help."

But will other American Catholics feel this same sense of compassion — this same commitment to help Haiti's

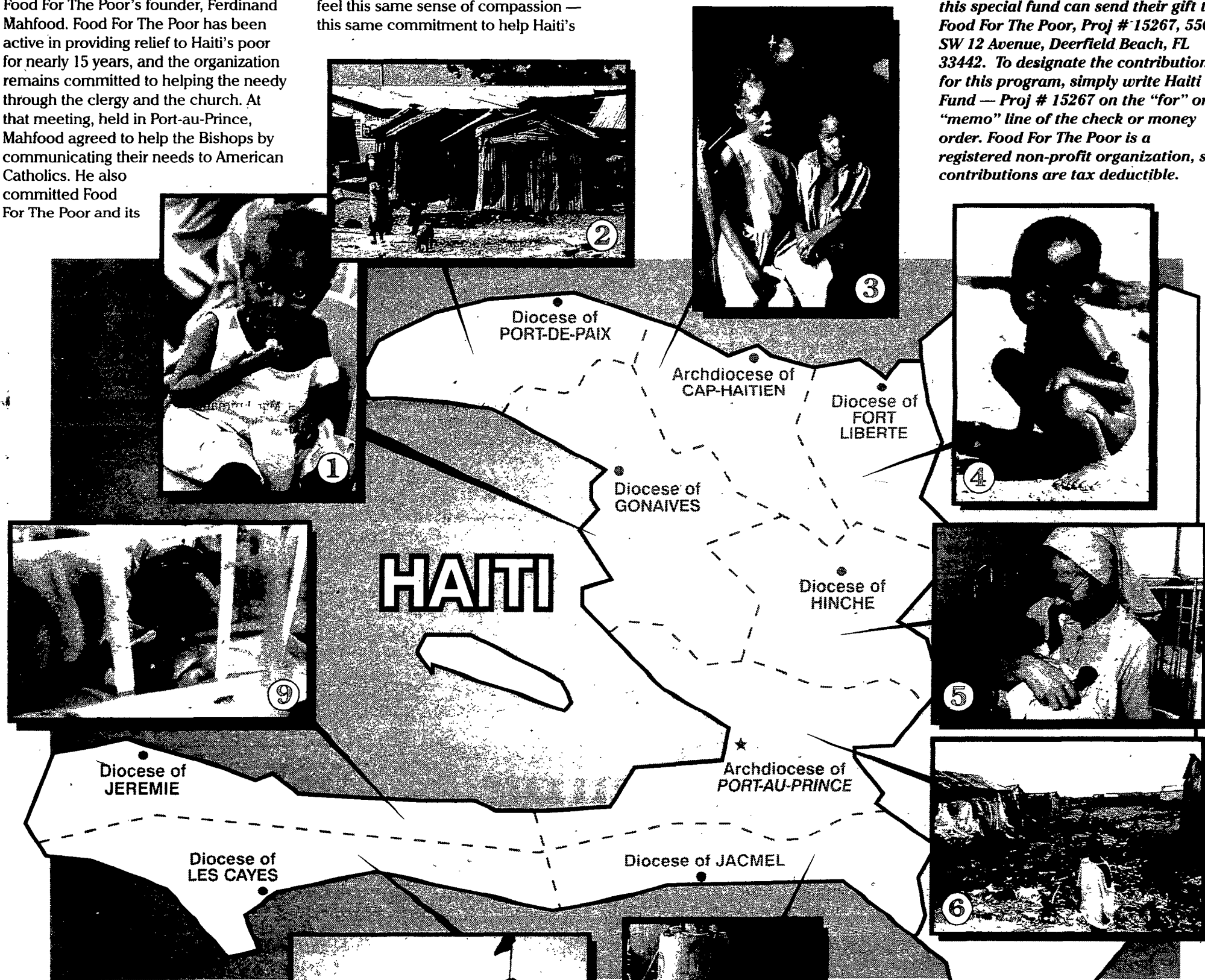
poor? Will the pleas of these Archbishops and Bishops be meaningful to people of a different nationality, culture and language?

"Yes, I think most American Catholics see themselves as part of a universal family of believers — they understand that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. They see beyond the boundaries of nations, cultures and languages and rally to human need wherever it is found. They know that our faith is founded on unbounded, unconditional love," Mahfood said. "Yes, I am confident that the Bishops will be heard and that American Catholics will respond. I believe this is our opportunity to shine for the glory of God."

Based on the Bishop's meeting and past needs, the special fund will be used to alleviate hunger, provide for emergency medical care and support critically needed developmental work in each diocese. Because the Bishops will be able to request exactly what they need, specific needs will be served and waste will be eliminated.

"The impact of this program will be measured in children fed and clothed, lives saved with medical care and families rescued from extreme poverty. Every contribution counts, no matter how small. Every gift will make a difference," Mahfood said.

**Anyone interested in contributing to this special fund can send their gift to: Food For The Poor, Proj # 15267, 550 SW 12 Avenue, Deerfield Beach, FL 33442. To designate the contribution for this program, simply write Haiti Fund — Proj # 15267 on the "for" or "memo" line of the check or money order. Food For The Poor is a registered non-profit organization, so contributions are tax deductible.**



1. Bishop Emmanuel Constant serves the Diocese of Gonaives. The diocese will benefit greatly from additional feeding programs for the poor.

2. The Diocese of Port-de-Paix was created in 1861 to encompass the northwestern district of Haiti. The diocese is served by Bishop Frantz Colimon, S.M.M., appointed in 1982.

3. Archbishop François Gayot, S.M.M. serves the Archdiocese of Cap-Haitien and he is president of the Haitian Bishop's Conference. The diocese holds the second largest city in Haiti and suffers from desperate urban poverty.

4. Bishop Hubert Constant O.M.I. serves the Diocese of Fort-Liberte. This area's coastline is dotted with poor fishing villages where families struggle to survive. Sadly, clothing and shoes are not considered necessities for a family in need of food, so many children only receive such items when they are gifts from a church or missionary.



5. The Diocese of Hinche is served by Bishop Léonard-Pétion Laroche. There are few formal medical facilities in this harsh rural area, and a new clinic for the poor of the diocese would be a tremendous blessing.

6. Haiti's capital city is the namesake at the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. Within the city and at its outskirts are some of the worst slums in this hemisphere — largest among them, Cité Soleil, Archbishop François W. Ligonde, Auxiliary Bishop Louis Kebeau, S.D.B. and



Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese, Bishop Joseph LaFontant are working together to serve these people and find solutions to the area's terrible poverty.

7. Bishop Guy Poulard serves the Diocese of Jacmel on Haiti's southern coast. Hunger and homelessness are problems here, and families with young children are often tragic victims of such poverty. Food For The Poor builds basic housing to alleviate this suffering.

8. The Diocese of Les Cayes is served by Bishop Alix Verrier. Many poor communities in Haiti are struggling to provide a standard education for children. Some basic schools are little more than patchwork tin shacks with no desks, chairs or supplies.

9. Bishop Willy Romelus serves the Archdiocese of Jeremie. Many infants here and elsewhere in Haiti suffer from malnutrition or illness within months of birth. Church-run clinics are often the only source of hope for these little ones.