

CLC Canada Central Region Common Apostolic Mission

Journeying Together in Hispaniola - Trip Report

Our Insertion Experience - February 2011



Hispaniola Insertion Experience 2011

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TRIP OVERVIEW BY ADRIENNE DE SCHUTTER, CENTRAL REGION, CLC CANADA

HIGHLIGHTS

Who went?

There were six of us who participated in the Hispaniola Insertion 2011 Trip from Feb. 20 to Feb. 27, 2011.

- Mary Balfe (Past Central Region Rep to National, and President CLC Canada),
- Andree Richard (CREXCO - current Central Region Rep to National),
- Lidvina Yoon (CREXCO - Secretary),
- Adrienne De Schutter (CREXCO - Coordinator of Communities),
- Fr. JP Horigan (CREXCO – Ecclesial Assistant),
- Sam Loutfi (President CVX Canada),



Here we all are with collaborators/new friends – Fr. Mario and Duna

(Front row L to R: Andree, Fr. Mario, Lidvina, Duna; Back row L to R: Adrienne, Sam, Mary, and Fr. JP)

We were “sent” as a team representing both CVX French Canada and CLC English Canada, through the Central Region Common Apostolic Mission.



Sam Loutfi, President, CVX Canada and Mary Balfe, President, CLC Canada

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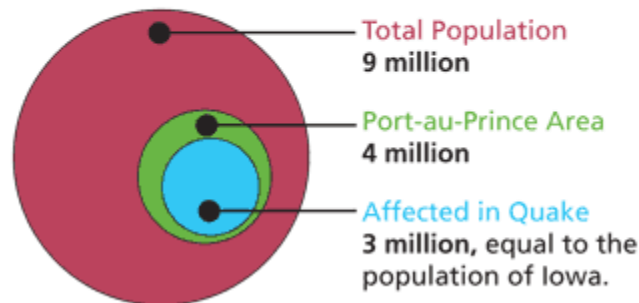
Fr. JP Horrigan had visited Hispaniola in August of 2010 and expertly organized all of the arrangements for the entire trip. We are deeply grateful for all his wonderful work and great example.

Why did we go?

We went to learn first-hand the challenges being faced by disadvantaged people of Haiti and to learn about the efforts of Jesuits and others in the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti trying to help them. All expenses for the trip were paid fully by the six of us who participated.

Human Impact

It is estimated that one in three people in Haiti will require emergency relief as a result of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

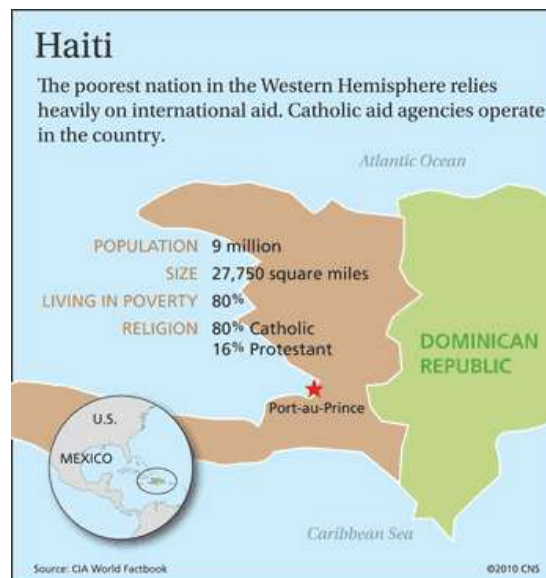


Sources: Red Cross, U.S. Census Bureau, CIA Fact Book

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Where did we go?

We visited the island of Hispaniola, which includes the DR to the east and Haiti to the west. Our main destination was Santo Domingo, DR but we also travelled 6 hrs. north to Dajabon, DR and its border town of Ouanaminthe, Haiti. The DR is principally Spanish speaking and Haiti is principally French (or Creole) speaking.



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What did we do?

- Sunday pm – Mary, JP, Lidvina and Adrienne met at Toronto Airport, Andree and Sam met in Montreal
- Sunday evening – All six of us met at Punta Cana airport, take a bus to Santo Domingo
- Monday – Visit with Fr. Mario for orientation re: Hispaniola, Centro Bono and SJRM (Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Services)
- Tuesday am – Visit to La Cienaga School, and Fe y Alegria Schools
- Tuesday pm – Reviewing the Documentation Process at Centro Bono
- Wednesday am – Visit to La Cienaga School, and Fe y Alegria Schools
- Wednesday pm – Visited the home of friends in La Cienaga, its neighbourhood and the newly built, St-Ignatius parish church. One hour visit to the Colonial Tourist area.
- Wednesday evening – Skype call to CLC in Toronto, meeting with Haitian Jesuit Scholastics studying at Centro Bono, Santo Domingo
- Thursday am – early morning departure for Dajabon, travel for 6 hrs
- Thursday pm – arrival in Dajabon, in the afternoon, meeting with Fr. David Pantaleon, Pastor at the Dajabon Cathedral, then orientation Haitian Dominican relations and the Jesuit Solidaridad Fronteriza by Fr. Regino Martinez Breton. This was followed by a quick visit with Magdalena and Alda at the Domay Cooperative and an evening meeting with CVX groups from the Dajabon area followed by mass.
- Friday am – early morning visit to Domay Cooperative and then to Fr. Regino Martinez Breton, SJ in Dajabon for his kind assistance with a truck, escort and passes before crossing the border to Ouanaminthe, Haiti, to meet the Jesuits there.
- Friday pm – travel 6 hrs to Santo Domingo, evening meeting with DR CVX group in Santo Domingo
- Saturday– Sam and Andree depart, the remaining four of us plan presentations/reports and take photos of jewellery
- Sunday am – Mass, return car rental and bus trip to Punta Cana for flight home

A FEW THINGS WE LEARNED

- We had a great translator, Hugo, who was with us throughout the trip. We learned he could translate in multiple languages – Spanish, Creole, French and English – sometimes all in one meeting!
- The importance of group discernment – applied to all aspects of our trip – including our decision to make a donation of our funds to support Hugo and his family in their pursuit of documentation. We went as a team as part of a Central Region Mission and as a good collaboration with CVX Quebec, so we made this decision regarding donations as a team.
- We learned that in the DR and Haiti – the main rule you need to know is IBM. Not sure exactly what this stands for but basically it means, expect the unexpected, it's never as simple as you think it's going to be – and tomorrow is another day.
- We are all familiar with the GPS tracking system? Our team had Fr. J.P. Horrigan who became affectionately known as our "JP"S tracker.

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THE 5 JESUIT PRIORITIES FOR HAITI: BY SAM LOUTFI, CVX CANADA

BACKGROUND - JESUITS IN HAITI

The dominant religion in Haiti is Catholicism, with over 70% of Haitians being Catholic.



More than one year after the earthquake in Haiti there are currently about 50 Jesuits, the majority (90%) of them being Haitian. All are very committed to the reconstruction of the country. Throughout 2010 and the beginning of 2011 the main challenge was discerning the most urgent necessities and, among these, the ones in which the Jesuits could effectively intervene. Haiti is a Jesuit province with Québec administration. Presently Fr. Biron, Jean-Marc is Provincial of Quebec proper. Fr. Biron collaborates with two Haitian delegate Jesuits, 1- Kawas François, and 2-Miller Lamothe to realize the five Jesuits priorities for Haiti. Jesuits and other NGO organizations share these same five Jesuit Priorities.

SUMMARY OF THE FIVE PRIORITIES

Through our trip to Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti we had the chance to meet Fr. Mario Montserano, SJ, (Coordinator of Jesuit activities for Haitian migrants in the DR). Fr. Mario had travelled many times between the DR and Haiti, and he spoke to us about these priorities. I was impressed with his vision and strong faith in a better future for Haiti.



Left to Right – Fr. JP Horrigan, Fr Mario, Sam Loutfi

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1. To develop basic schools in collaboration with the Fe y Alegría (Faith and Joy) network.

About this first priority he said: “Education has long been a priority for the Jesuits; we must help all the children have good schools with good teachers.” Through the Jesuit Fe y Alegría school system Haitian Jesuits are working to promote universal education in Haiti, a key necessity in helping to build a resilient and sustainable Haitian-led recovery.



Children in the Playground at a Fe Y Alegría School

Fr. Mario insisted that a key to success is cooperation with the local community to choose the technical programs which can help create job opportunities, small businesses and micro financial activities.



Streetscape of one of the Fe y Alegría schools near the La Ciengaga school

2. To sustain refugees, (urgent interventions and in defence of human rights)

The Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service (SJM) in the Dominican Republic – working in coordination with SJM Haiti and other Jesuit relief efforts there – has established three centers in the Dominican Republic to coordinate the transfer of food, medicine and other emergency supplies to the people of Haiti.

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The three operations centers are located in Santo Domingo, at the SJRM Bono Center; Jimani, on the southern border between the DR and Haiti, the main port of entry because of its proximity to Port-au-Prince; and Puerto Tabar Principe, at the premises of the Jesuit novitiate there.

Fr. Mario is helping to organize and process the supplies from the Dominican. JRS has established several sites throughout the hardest hit areas of Haiti some of these, and the partners JRS is working with, are indicated on this map. <http://bit.ly/86cUp7>. He added that we need an experienced team to plan the real needs and build processes adapted with the Haitian culture reality.



Crossing the frontier bridge on Market day – from Ouanaminthe (Haiti) to Dajabon (RD)

3. To solicit social formation for the reconstruction of the country

The Provincial Jesuit of Quebec named a Haitian delegate, Fr. Kawas François SJ, a University Professor, to achieve this important priority. Fr. Francois needs a good leadership team to analyse the social-economic situation and find a solution. After the earthquake of January 2010 many people died but we also saw an excellent sharing and solidarity among the people. At the time of our visit, the political situation had divided the people of Haiti and created instability.

I had the chance to discuss this aspect with the five future Jesuits. They are aware of this reality and they have a strong willingness to help re-build their country. After meeting with them I strongly believed that Haitian-people can guide their destiny and develop the country if the external influences provide supportive rather than dominant leadership .



Jesuit Scholastics – Levelt, Lucien, Johnny, Germain and Amos visiting us at our hotel El Señorial

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4. To propose a spiritual accompaniment adapted to the circumstances:

Provincial Jesuit of Quebec named Haitian delegate Jesuits, Miller Lamothe for this priority. Unfortunately, Fr. Lamothe has another important responsibility with the novices which prevents him from giving his undivided attention to achieving this priority.

What we need here as Fr. Mario said: volunteers with a good knowledge of the real needs as the Fr. Mathieu who came from Spain and worked hard in this area, by communicating his ideas clearly and preparing the Haitian society itself to accept and collaborate with social workers, Jesuits or other volunteers. This will build the needed trust.

5. To contribute to the reinforcement of Haitian-Dominican relations

A statement from the Jesuits' binational office (Haiti and DR) said that it is too early to evaluate the efforts made in the past 15 months. "Much remains to be done and the path is long. However, the inner strength of the Haitian people in the face of the situation they are experiencing has affected many." The fact that the Dominican Republic (DR) needs the Haitian laborers and Haitian laborers need jobs to have a normal life, is the crux of a solution. In addition, the border can be passed easily. There is no need for sea or air transportation so illegal entry comes with a minimum cost.



Meeting with Fr. Regino Martinez Breton, SJ at Solideridad Fronteriza in Dajabon, D.R.

In the Dominican Republic, many religious organizations and other civil society organizations coordinated an appropriate support to Haiti, Centro Bono played and plays an important role in this priority, through the Joint Border Solidarity Office and four human right offices in Dajabon, Santiago, Santo Domingo, Elias Pina-Jimani.

Centro Bono is pushing the DR government to be more flexible, to support the 4% education budget rate and to try to receive exterior governmental support from other countries such as Canada, USA, Mexico.

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Discussion of the Five Jesuit Priorities during visit to Centro Bono

WHAT IS CENTRO BONO? BY ADRIENNE DE SCHUTTER, CLC CANADA CENTRAL REGION

Centro Bono is a Jesuit organization in Santo Domingo, D.R. and two other satellite locations also in the D.R. Fr. Mario the Director of Central Bono met with us the first day and explained their three main departments or activities and their strategies.



Two Jesuits – Fr. JP Horrigan and Fr. Mario Montaserano (Directo, Centro Bonó)

Their three departments are;

1. Migration Legal Services – run by Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Services (SJRM)
2. Grassroots Lobby and Policy Organization
3. Institute of Philosophy and Humanities - post-secondary education

They have four principle strategies;

1. Research,
2. Leadership Training
3. Advocacy and
4. Accompanying or supporting those they help.

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For example, a recent campaign they had was to lobby DR government to increase their spending on education from less than 2% of total budget to 4%. Their philosophy includes having the data (recently held 55 meetings involving 1200 grassroots organizations across the DR), networking (they don't use their logo on projects they lead), training (esp. of youth) and empowering the poor and disadvantaged. They believe it is important to lobby and work with the government for just conditions. They acknowledge that they may not always succeed in all of their efforts, but they know that other in the future can learn from their efforts. They are planting the seed.

MIGRANT & REFUGEE SERVICES, CENTRO BONO BY ANDREE RICHARD, CLC CANADA CENTRAL REGION

DOCUMENTATION SERVICES

A team of four people is in charge of this process at Centro Bono. The team consists of two lawyers, taking legal action and appealing to the courts when necessary. As well, two promoters accompany the people until the documentation is complete - appealing to the lawyers when help is needed.

This team dealing with immigration issues provides a public work ministry, with a focus on advocacy for the people, regarding the civil state found in the Dominican Republic. Priorities are given to the very, very poor and to parents without education. It is accessible to Haitians as well as Dominicans.

Generational history has many inhabitants of the DR without proper documentation in place. Migrant parents from Haiti came to find relief from their own tumultuous country, looking for a better life. Inability to acquire proper documentation was due to a combination of the following: lack of funds, lack of knowledge and inability to proceed on their own. In turn, children born of those parents fell under the same category.



Meeting with Two International Volunteers (from Peru and Spain) working with the Legal Team at Centro Bono

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR IRREGULAR CITIZENS BY THE AUTHORITIES IN THE DR

1. **Birth certificate:** Parents of children born in the Dominican Republic have two years to obtain a birth certificate for their child. Failing to do so, results in the child becoming an irregular citizen. A mother without her own documentation prevents her child from getting a birth certificate as well as proper documentation.

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Since 2010, the Constitutional Law declares:” Being born in the Dominican Republic does not make you a Dominican”. Possessing a birth certificate gives the child citizenship status, a right to education, access to health insurance and other public services. The cost for a birth certificate is \$25.00 US.

2. **Passport:** Needed to provide one’s identity and nationality.
3. **Visa:** Temporary one year residency, renewable every two years to guarantee permanent residency. The cost is \$250 every two years for the renewal.

The documentation process through a Government agency could take many years to complete and would cost about \$1000.US for an adult and \$700.US for a child.

Centro Bono offers a qualified applicant the same service for about \$300.US as well as providing accompaniment until the documentation has been obtained in a time period of 8 to 10 months.

LABOUR RIGHTS

Labour rights conflicts are also resolved at Centro Bono in equipping labourers’ with knowledge of their rights, as well as ways to communicate peacefully with the authorities.

Bateyes

The most common problems are found in Bateyes. These are company towns where sugar-cane workers live. Seasonal Haitian migrants come to work for these companies in the hope of finding financial means. Some have stayed past the harvest season and started families, inhabiting these company towns. The State Sugar Council and private sugar Companies have been responsible for the welfare of these people and have too often, neglected to fulfill their responsibilities.

By accompanying these people every step of the way, the team is able to offer support, human rights advocacy as well as social laws education. The growth of a grass root movement is happening in conjunction with the journey experienced by these people thereby empowering them to deal with their own issues. The promoters’ approach on “capacity building” enables the spreading of competent skills and proper knowledge to the rest of the community.

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LA CIENAGA SCHOOL, SANTO DOMINGO, D.R. BY LIDVINA YOON, CLC CANADA CENTRAL REGION



La Cienaga Classroom "School" – Supported by CLC Canada Central Region, Duna, the Principal, and her grandson, Abdel, in the centre of the photo.

The school was only one small room used by about 20 children and 3 teachers with small patch of school yard. Children may be living in La Cienaga but they have something only children can have; innocent eyes...



A visit with Louisa from Centro Bono inside La Cienaga School

We handed over our bootys to La Cienaga school; pencils, notes, books... We spent some time with children. I talked to two 11 year old boys, two 12 year old girls and one 13 year old girl. These children seem to be the oldest in this school. I wonder how these children can continue their study if they are learning the things that the children who should have been in grade 4, 5, 6 are just beginning to learn...

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We visited St. Ignatius church – in the neighborhood of La Cienaga. Across this church, there was public school (Fe Y Alegria) where only children with documents can go. There is a good relationship between the La Cienaga school and the Fe Y Alegria school. La Cienaga has modelled itself after the Fe Y Alegria schools – and the children at La Cienaga school even wear similar uniforms to those worn at Fe Y Alegria.

I was also impressed by the people at La Cienaga, for the fact that in spite of their hardships they came together and thought to educate these children. These children at La Cienaga definitely need help so that they can become an adult who can contribute in society not only in Dominican Republic where they are living but also for their own country, Haiti.

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OUR TRIP EXPERIENCE BY MARY BALFE, CLC CANADA

PREPARATION:

Months ahead of the trip: Fr. J.P. Horrigan masterfully began to make connections for the team to meet and visit:

- in Dominican Republic with the SJ's (Centro Bono) and staff from the La Cienaga (Haitian and Dominican slum area also known as the Swamp) in Santo Domingo,
- to Dajabon, the Solidaridad Fronteriza office in the north, CVX communities, and the Domay Cooperative, both near the border and
- to Ouanaminthe, across the DR/Haitian border to visit the SJ's Solidarite Frontier office there.

The Insertion team from Central and CVX had approximately 3 Skype calls to address specific plans and J.P. provided a spreadsheet explaining the personal financial outlay for members on the insertion trip:

Flights: Consensus after flight investigation by the team and J.P. suggested a flight charter with Sunwing, providing direct flights departing the same day from Montreal or Toronto and arriving close to the same time in Punta Cana. Departure from Montreal/Toronto to La Roma, Dominican Republic was our hope as it is closer to Santo Domingo but short notice on flight times did not allow for this option. Limits on baggage in KGs alerted some to share the weight of the school supplies for transit at the airport. WE HAD TO WORK QUICKLY TO GET THE PRICE POINT (best price).

Immunization: for Hepatitis, Cholera and Malaria were recommended by health authorities (some team members had health coverage...some did not).

Other costs: Recommended Accommodation: criteria- clean, safe, and reasonably priced, meals, taxi, buses, tips, translator/drivers, hospitality from Centro Bono.

Money Exchange: buying some American dollars and Pesos prior to leaving was recommended.

Snacks: bringing a few snacks from home included reusable water bottles, power bars, gum, gum, gum, mints, peanuts, Pringles, raisins. (These came in handier than we might have imagined when we were making the 6 hour trip to Dajabon and were not finding a restaurant.)

Meeting at the Airport to get our boarding passes without, packing baggage within weight limits and celebrating mass in the Airport Interfaith Prayer Centre.

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Celebrating mass together in Toronto's Pearson Airport Interfaith Prayer Centre

OUR DAILY EXPERIENCE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND HAITI



Starting our day with breakfast and a planning session at the hotel – Hugo our translator and guide on the far right.

Every day was planned down to the wire....maybe we would get a siesta in the pm maybe not...Our meals were generally eaten in the restaurant on the hotel premises but there were times when we ate at Centro Bono and of course on the 6 hour road trip to Dajabon. One time mass was at 6:30 in the am!

At the end of the day and generally before dinner, even if dinner was 8:00pm, we celebrated mass together on a little balcony that adjoined Fr. J.P. and Sam's hotel room #5. Afterwards we would sit with a glass of wine and encounter the day with one another, 'evaluating' and noting where we met Jesus and sharing what

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transformation was going on within and around us. The Holy Spirit generously blessed us individually and as a team together, gathered in his name.

We found ourselves regularly saying “next time” when we would be experiencing something that we wanted to remember to do better ‘next time’. Well now we know that having a little book in our pocket is the answer to recalling those precious insights as well as names and addresses of acquaintancesfor ‘next time’.

Trip Expenses: TOTAL COST per person: \$1,200 - \$1500

- On arrival \$1.00 (American) initial cost immediately followed by \$10.00 US to enter Dominican Republic
- 3 hour taxi to Santo Domingo prearranged on line. (met at the airport) Pesos
- Hotel shared accommodation \$30.00 nightly including DR taxes and gratuity. Pesos/credit card.
- Meals at the hotel on a daily basis or randomly on the road when travelling. Pesos/credit cards, snacks!!
- Rented van/driver to and from Dajabon. (On J.P.’s credit card)
- Return Taxi / Bus / Taxi to Punta Cana Airport (Pesos)
- Use of truck to travel into Haiti, and then at the border \$1.00 US to enter Haiti and \$10.00 US to re-enter Dominican Republic (once in a lifetime fee).

Note: *When any of us were without correct pesos/dollars needed an arrangement was made for everyone to kick in for the other and at the end of the day “settle up”. One team member was identified to keeping track of these transactions. A most challenging and critical job.*

Who did we meet? We encountered as many as 35 people whose names we recorded: from priests to waiters, from CVX friends to children in La Cienaga, from hotel maids to the principal of our school.

Domay Cooperative: We met Magdalena (our contact) and Alda a young woman from Colombia working for a Spanish NGO who sponsors this cooperative endeavour. We were encouraged to return the next day to make our purchases as there would be new items arriving on market day...so by 8:00 a.m. the following morning we were delighted to see the new jewellery and spread it carefully from its packets across the floor. Such fun! While this was going on Andree and Adrienne were off to the bank to settle face to face the challenges with money transfers from Canada.



Meeting with the Women from Domay – Magdalena (Centre Right) and Alda (Centre Left)

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Let me tell you about our new CVX friends. We were received with open arms by CVX communities in the north at Dajabon where there were men and women of mature age (like me☺) with a sprinkle of younger women. Their lively hood has been truncated through recent government policies against wood cutting for furniture building and we were told homes are in serious need of repair throughout the community. D.R. CVX has been re-established with their brother and sisters in the north to collaborate in response to this need, through simple networking. The next night we had the privilege of meeting a CVX community of 12 young adult women in Santo Domingo...they are 'go getters' having just come together in the last year. One member is the new CLC President of the DR and one member looking to settle in Canada. They are willing and excited to collaborate with us.

Would we go again? YES! We will go with the resounding "Yes" of Mary our Mother.

CURRENT AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

- **To encourage every member of CLC Central to "catch the fire" of this specific and extraordinary call to help build the Kingdom through offering what the Spirit asks of us: prayer, jewellery sales, offering any creative responses as the Spirit gives rise to them.**
- To continue building relationships and collaborating with CVX Dominican Republic , CVX Dajabon and Jesuits, with CVX French Canada, with CLC Regions across Canada and USA.
- To continue to develop our common mission with a preferential option for the poor, particularly in education for Haitian children through Fe Y' Alegria schools and support of Haitian women through jewellery sales and those in need of documentation.
- To share Ignatian tools for discerned decision making with our school collaborators and the local community.
- To link CVX Young Women D.R. with CLC Young Women of Canada to extend the collaborative mission
- To advocate for Haitian workers through lobbying against the unjust treatment of those workers who serve in the tourist trade and resorts.
- To plant seeds for harvest: planting seeds for CLC/CVX groups where ever we go.



Our Lady of Hispaniola – Note the respective flags of Haiti and Dominican Republic worn by the two children

so appropriate for the SJRM Frontier Office of the both countries!

ISAIAH 55

A FINAL INVITATION

¹ Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money, free!

² Why spend money on what cannot nourish and your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy.

³ Pay attention, come to me; listen, and you will live. I shall make an everlasting covenant with you in fulfilment of the favours promised to David.

⁴ Look, I have made him a witness to peoples, a leader and lawgiver to peoples.

⁵ Look, you will summon a nation unknown to you, a nation unknown to you will hurry to you for the sake of Yahweh your God, because the Holy One of Israel has glorified you.

⁶ Seek out Yahweh while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near.

⁷ Let the wicked abandon his way and the evil one his thoughts. Let him turn back to Yahweh who will take pity on him, to our God, for he is rich in forgiveness;

⁸ for my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways, declares Yahweh.

⁹ For the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts.

¹⁰ For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat,

¹¹ so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do.

¹² Yes, you will go out with joy and be led away in safety. Mountains and hills will break into joyful cries before you and all the trees of the countryside clap their hands.

¹³ Cypress will grow instead of thorns, myrtle instead of nettles. And this will be fame for Yahweh, an eternal monument never to be effaced.