

Message of Solidarity and Sympathy with the People of Haiti

Pax Christi International expresses deep condolences and solidarity with the people of Haiti following the recent earthquake and calls for prayers and prompt support in the relief efforts.

The severe earthquake that struck Haiti and the Dominican Republic has inflicted large-scale damage to hospitals, health facilities, places of worship and church infrastructure. A large number of casualties are feared. The major earthquake that shocked the Caribbean nation of Haiti on 12 January 2010 has become yet another in a series of natural disasters to hit this already vulnerable country, the poorest in the western hemisphere. Haiti is a nation that has already suffered from years of humanitarian crises and natural disasters, including a series of hurricanes that battered the country in 2008.

Pax Christi International has two member organisations in Haiti: Pax Christi Port-au-Prince and the Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix.

1. Pax Christi Port-au-Prince:

We have little news about what happened to many of our friends and their relatives. Pax Christi USA has been in touch with friends of Pax Christi in Port-au-Prince. Wilda Mondestin, Pax Christi's Port-au-Prince Executive Director, is alive and well and assisting in relief efforts. We give thanks for Wilda's safety and our hearts go out to her as she works to care for others affected by the devastation. There is still no word concerning our other colleagues, but we continue to pray for their safety.

2. Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix:

We mourn the death of Msgr. Serge Miot, Archbishop of Port-au-Prince and President of the National Commission for Justice and Peace Haiti. His body has been found in the ruins of the archdiocese office. The cathedral did not survive the devastation. Fr. Jan Hanssens, the director of the Commission, is safe and well, but his home has been destroyed as well. We pray for the safety of the membership of the Commission.

3. Claudette Werleigh:

Claudette Werleigh, our Secretary General from Haiti, has been in touch with relatives who remain in the country, many of whom are safe and well but from others no news yet. The house of her family has been damaged but her husband is o.k., thanks to God. She has been contacted by many journalists and press agencies over the last two days. She thanks all of our

member organisations and all of you who expressed sorrow and solidarity with her and the people of Haiti.

4. Pax Christi USA, Maryknoll, Pax Christi France:

Some of our member organisations worldwide have expressed sorrow and pain with the Haitian people. On 13 January 2010, Pax Christi USA issued a statement on the earthquake in Haiti and their concerns for the relief and reconstruction of that nation. The statement reads in part:

"We call for a monumental and unprecedented effort from President Obama's administration to generously provide for the immediate relief efforts needed in Haiti, while also committing to a partnership with nongovernmental organizations and the Haitian government to assure the rebuilding and reconstruction of civil society and infrastructure that can lead to a new Haiti. Pax Christi encourages the U.S. to take this opportunity to embark on a bold, new policy toward Haiti, employing a long-term, collaborative approach and deferring to the advice and expertise of Haitians and in-country actors who, out of love for Haiti, have long struggled in solidarity alongside the Haitian people." Read full statement at www.paxchristiusa.org

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, of which Marie Dennis our Pax Christi International Co-President is the Director does not have missions in Haiti, but several Maryknoll Affiliates have deep ties with that nation. Many Maryknoll missionaries, employees and friends are connected to Haiti in different ways, either through Pax Christi USA or through other organizations. More at www.maryknollogc.org

On 15 January 2010, Msgr. Marc Stenger, Bishop President of Pax Christi France and member of the Executive Committee of Pax Christi International, issued a declaration in collaboration with other French NGOs asking for prayers in parishes and communities during the week-end of 16 and 17 January 2010. Read the French press release at

<http://www.paxchristi.cef.fr/docs/CPresse.Haiti.15janv2010.pdf>

<http://www.paxchristi.cef.fr/docs/Haiti.AppelGarnierStenger.janv2010.pdf>

5. Prayers

Let us keep our member organisations, Pax Christi and the National Commission for Justice and Peace in Haiti, the family of Claudette Werleigh and all Haitians in your prayers and thoughts during this time of chaos and devastation. May God bless the people of Haiti and those working on their behalf.

Prayer for Haiti from Fr. Claude Mostowik, President of Pax Christi Australia

**Compassionate One,
our hearts cry out for the people of Haiti :
for the millions affected,
for lost loved ones,
lost homes,
and lost livelihoods.
Draw us together as your people
to help in whatever ways we can,
and we ask for your grace in helping the emergency rescue and aid workers.
As we work to bring relief and rescue,
may the powers strive also
to bring peace with justice to the people of Haiti
so that they may live and be raised in fullness of dignity
by provision of housing, education and healthcare.**

Brussels, 15 January 2010
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