

Bercy School Mission Project 2020

*St. Thomas à
Becket Mission
Committee*

Sept., 2020

Thank You Saint Thomas à Becket

**Your prayers, your love and your generous support are
changing lives for the better in Haiti!!**

**Over the last 10 years, St Thomas à Becket has developed
a strong relationship with the clergy and the people of
this impoverished rural community.**

**Here are a few of the ways your contributions were used
to support the educational needs of the Bercy School for
the 2019-2020 school year:**

- Monthly support to help pay the teachers and provide a hot lunch for the children each school day.
- Provide tuition and transportation assistance to the students who previously graduated from Grade 6 at Bercy and who are continuing their studies at the secondary school in Cavaillon.
- Purchase new school books and workbooks for all grades at the Bercy school.
- Ongoing tuition support and laptops for the nursing and agronomy students pursuing their college courses in Les Cayes.
- Help to repair the parish truck, which is essential for transporting supplies between Cavaillon and Bercy and doing other parish business.



Keep reading to find out more!

Life Goes on in Haiti in the Midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic

The pandemic truly is global. Despite fears that Haitian workers forced to leave the Dominican Republic this spring would bring the virus into the country, official government figures suggest that COVID-19 has not run uncontrolled through the population in Haiti. But official figures likely do not capture the full story, and plenty of people have been infected, even in Bercy and other areas that are a long way from Port-au-Prince and fairly isolated.

As news of the virus spread, all schools in Haiti were shuttered in mid-March and people were confined to their homes. Even rural farmers remained isolated at home, preventing them from planting or tending their small fields. These shutdowns came on top of several months of drought that had already compromised their crops and made it difficult to maintain livestock, contributing to worsening food shortages. Additionally, inflation is rapidly driving up the cost of basic essentials. We believe that support from St. Thomas à Becket originally sent for school expenses enabled them to continue providing some food assistance to the community during this difficult time despite the school closure.

In late February, before schools closed, the nursing student we are helping to support, Venette, came to Bercy to teach the school children and the teachers about corporal and alimentary hygiene . She is completing her second year of



studies in Les Cayes and returns to Bercy from time to time, as promised, to provide this type of instruction. (The agronomy student we help to support, Tosmane, is winding up his fifth and final year of university studies and also returns to Bercy when he can to help with the school garden program.)

Venette in the classroom

Support in the midst of the Covid Epidemic

In April, thanks to a generous parish donor, we were able to respond to an urgent request to finance the purchase of a system of hand-washing stations that was installed at the Bercy school. Venette (shown here putting the Clorox in the water container) helped to get everything up and running, and two other young people we had engaged in our earlier efforts to bring clean drinking water to the Bercy community were also on hand to assist.



NEW HAND-WASHING STATIONS AT THE SCHOOL



Our Lady of Perpetual Help

In June, despite the social distancing restrictions, our friends were able to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the patron saint of Haiti and of Cavaillon (the town closest to Bercy). After nine days of preparatory celebrations, they had a procession around town and celebrated Mass with 5 priests but only 8 others in attendance due to the coronavirus restrictions. After the Mass, the church was opened to 5 masked people at a time who could come to venerate Our Lady and offer her prayers for deliverance from the virus.



Mass, Procession and Veneration for Our Lady of Perpetual Help!

As you can see from the pictures, they have rebuilt the cathedral beautifully after the damage the 300-year old structure sustained in Hurricane Matthew several years ago!



Schools Re-opened!

On August 3, all Haitian schools re-opened with the goal of completing the months that remain from the interrupted 2019-2020 school year. They plan to make up for that lost instruction time by October, and will then start with the 2020-2021 school year.



The “early” resumption of classroom activity at the school raises the bar for the St. Thomas à Becket Haiti Mission in terms of the support that will be needed for the coming year.

WE HOPE YOU CAN HELP!

MISSION GOALS

While we have not been able to travel to Haiti since 2018 due to situations both in Haiti and here at home, we remain committed to our mission to support the school and the community in Bercy.

But, because of the current protocols and restrictions in place to keep us safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, our fundraising strategy is a little bit different this year:

- Our immediate goal is to send enough financial support to carry them through December. That is 5 months (Aug-Dec) of support at our standard \$2,300 monthly contribution, or **\$11,500**. These funds help to pay the Bercy teachers and staff and provide a hot lunch to the children each day. The students' parents are also contributing what they can to cover these expenses. We would expect to need at least another 6 months of support to finish out the school year (or another \$13,800), possibly more depending on how long the school year needs to be extended next summer.
- We also hope to raise enough to be able to continue supporting the Bercy graduates who are now studying at the Notre Dame high school in Cavaillon.
- We would also like to help our school families to purchase school books and supplies locally. Last year we sent \$3,500 for this purpose; the cost is undoubtedly higher this year given the rampant inflation in the country.
- The tuition support for our wonderful nursing student will continue.
- At this time, in contrast to prior years, we are not collecting for a designated "special project" such as the new kitchen, a community well or the safe drinking water project. There is no shortage of additional needs, and a special project may be identified and funded as the year goes forward, but our immediate focus is on meeting our ongoing commitment to school tuition, teacher salary and hot lunch expenses.

Please prayerfully consider contributing to this worthwhile program.
Our suggested donation amount is \$150 but any amount is appreciated!

Mail check to:

St. Thomas à Becket
1421 Wiehle Ave
Reston, VA 21090

or

You may make your contribution with
Faith Direct using the new
"Bercy School—Haiti" giving account.

* Please make your check payable to Saint Thomas à Becket and write "Bercy School" in the memo line.