



## Fr. Rick's Easter Message

Dear Friends,

I call it our office, but for the half dozen of us who share it, that's pretty much the last thing that it really is. It is located just inside the main entrance to our St. Damien Pediatric Hospital, adjacent to the emergency ward.

It's where we gather before and after mass, receive lots of visitors for coffee, sit to solve problems that tie us up in knots. It is there that we store the body bags that we need for the ever present fatalities in the community, and the delivery kits for when we have to jump from the chairs, and be midwives (midhusbands?) to the women who deliver their babies even at the hospital doorstep.

It is where we hear the wailing of the women who have just lost a child, and try to offer a helpful word in the face of a sadness that, instead, leaves us speechless. From here we often rush into the emergency room, right next door, to help intervene when the needs of the critically hurt child surpass what our hospital can offer. And, believe me, much more than this happens in our "office."

It was here that I met Alourdes\* and her two companions, in their blood stained school uniforms, wounds being sutured, casts being applied, medicines being given.

It didn't take very long to realize they were three children with special needs. In fact they went to our sister program special needs school. It seems, as is the case with most children, their poor mothers have no other way to send them to school except on motorcycle taxi.

They even motorcycle-pool, sharing the cost of the monthly tariff among three to five families. You will often see up to five child passengers on a motorcycle, like kids on a toboggan, heading to or from school.

Alourdes, who could not speak any clear words, was trying to tell me what happened. She was pantomiming. The ride up the hill, the popping of the ragged and worn front tire, the flipping of the bike, the cars that almost ran them over, the way the driver, wounded himself, pulled them to safety, the kindness of St. Damien nurses.

She was a small girl, with disabilities that challenged her, and now new serious wounds, trying to bond with someone who cared, and share the tale of her shock and suffering.

When I went to bed that night, on my knees I said, "You have got to be kidding! Are you kidding? Don't these children have enough problems with their disabilities? With their poverty? And with this country which is beyond challenging for even the



strong and fully able? They had to be thrown from a bike, and nearly crushed in the street? And now they have to bear these new wounds? Are you honestly kidding?"

I felt the tragedy deeply, and could not even say any more to God than this, of the many things I wanted to speak.

In the morning, I heard a word in my heart. "What will you do for them?"

I started a regular routine: at the end of every second day (they are all long and hard days) I went to visit each of them in their impoverished neighborhoods. They were from different places. I would bring ice cream or other treats, and talk with them and tell them a story. I did this until they could go back to school, and then I visited them at school regularly. Until things seemed okay again.

For Alourdes this took longer than for the others, so I got to

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know her better. I also thought that in a more normal school setting, she might succeed in talking.

Thanks to Kenson Kaas, NPH Haiti National Director of Childcare, Alourdes was enrolled in the NPH elementary school, called Fr. Wasson Angels of Light.

Thanks to Alourdes's personal drive to live and to be involved, and to the many people who love and help her, she is starting to speak. Even a little too much!

The chemistry that makes all this happen is called redemption. From its Latin root, it means "to buy back." You pay for something good to happen. A homecoming that cannot happen, without a sacrifice offered gladly.

Alourdes's aunt has redeemed her after the death of her mother at childbirth.

Our school redeemed her by moving her into a community and challenging the growth of her capacities.

The wounded driver redeemed her by pulling her wounded frame out of the middle of the road.

Our nurses redeemed her with their skill and kind hearts.

In my prayer, I was told rather than to fume in anger, to redeem Alourdes through friendship and healing of memories.



*Alourdes at school*

The NPH school named for the angels, now redeems her by making sure her childhood years are engulfed by companionship and learning.

The celebration of Easter is an even wider and deeper story of redemption, of being brought back for God.

The Lord of Life, whose eye never sleeps and whose heart is nearer

than our own, is working through all of us so that Alourdes's final life chapter is eternal, whole and glorious. In fact, God is working for that, for all of us.

We hasten the work of redemption around us, when we help people feel they belong to our human family and are important to us, when we affirm the joy and meaning they find in their lives, and when their strivings to live and grow are enabled and celebrated.

Let's thank God together for the daily redemptions that we live and relish, and for the Great Redemption being worked and wrought for us by God, as we journey through life.

We at NPH thank God for you, for your families, for your support, and wish you a blessed Easter season.

Fr. Rick Frechette, CP, D.O.  
President, Board of Directors  
Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos Haiti

*\*Name changed to protect privacy.*



## Rays of Hope

From the end of March to August 2016, doctors at all governmental hospitals in Haiti were on strike. St. Damien not only offered continuous care throughout that time, it treated 2% to 25% more patients than usual during the first three months. Haiti's Ministry of Health recognized the role played by St. Damien at a press conference held by the executive director of the ministry when the strike ended.

On October 4, 2016, Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti with 145 mph winds causing severe destruction and flooding. Over 1,000 people were reported dead and 1.4 million people needed humanitarian assistance. NPH Haiti and the team at St. Damien provided support to those most in need in over 14 communities, assisting an estimated 6,100 people.

# Le gen lanmou, gen doule'

Angelo Rose, St. Damien Supporter

Somewhat ironically, I will start this reflection where physically my journey to Haiti ended...

Dazed and tired, I shuffled into my Ft. Lauderdale hotel and took my first shower in days. There, under the warm embrace of pulsing jets, I was overcome: The thundering guilt of having a home, a bed, clean water to bathe in and my God, the seemingly infinite power to turn the faucet to quench my thirst were collectively just too much to own. Haiti suffers at the most base levels of existence and until I experienced it first hand, its devastation remained an abstract truth. Now, there is not a day I don't recall a face, or silently chant, "Thank you," when I drink a glass of water. It is the difference between watching a video of someone on a roller coaster and *actually sitting* in the first car of one as it claps along tired rails. I knew, however, that ride was going to end for me, that I would fly out and leave behind the countless children I met, the selfless people giving so much to change the norm there. They remain, twisting and turning in markedly inadequate shelter and structure, exposed to the raging elements of nature and consequence of desperation. Children and adults alike are in critical need of nutrition, education and water. The country as a whole flounders in political corruption, unknowns and hypocrisies. The weight of it all was too much and I collapsed to the perfectly tiled shower floor. Sobbing and shaking, I tried to make sense of it all...

When our small group landed in Port-au-Prince, it was readily apparent that Haiti was strung together by the thinnest of threads. Amidst the chaos, St.

Damien Children's Hospital is an oasis. The doctors, nurses, employees, volunteers, and Fathers Rick Frechette and Enzo Del Brocco tirelessly devote each day to saving lives. The hospital is a clean, incredibly well run sanctuary for an endless sea of children in dire need of medical care. However, clean, potable water is infinitely sparse, and quality medicines and equipment are desperately needed.

Each morning, mothers line up outside the gates to seek medical care for their babies. As a musician often moonlighting as a trial attorney, admittedly I had limited medical skills to offer. This glaring deficiency seemed to matter very little. The children I met radiated with love, for in the arms of St. Damien they were fed, given medicine and the genuine opportunity to heal. What they sought from me, I could aptly provide. Often it was simply a smile, or a hug, or a fingertip-to-fingertip touch that calmed and soothed. My ego was consumed. Gone were daily worries about email and developing trends in recent case law. The next life-or-death argument concerning which divorcee would get the engraved soap dish took its proper place in oblivion. Though I am now several weeks removed from my trip, the penetrating eyes of hope travel thousands of miles daily to visit me.

Adjacent to the hospital is the beautiful and rustic Chapel of St. Philomena, where there are daily morning masses. Most are tragically, in fact, vigils for children who have died. The first one I attended was before the bodies of seven children, wrapped in light-blue paper



and gently placed in reusable cardboard coffins. Three of the four caskets contained not one, but two tiny bodies. I was overcome. Life and death in Haiti are perpetually at odds and sometimes there is simply nothing that can be done. That reality, amidst some of the finest medical professionals the world has to offer, was immeasurably painful. And yet, as mass concluded, the small congregation (often comprised of employees and volunteers) breathed life into an old Creole Hymn and ferried the coffins to an awaiting flatbed to be transported for cremation. No family members were there to say goodbye, but there was little doubt about the reverberating weight of each loss. These daily masses are a divine opportunity to reflect upon the immense need in Haiti, the tragedy of such profound poverty and the senseless deaths of innocent children. I saw no greater demonstration of love than during the masses, where the forgotten are remembered and hearts are torn open in the remembrance of the gift and fragility of life.

*Le gen lanmou, gen doule'*  
When there is love, there is pain.

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*Angelo Rose is an attorney and musician from Rochester, NY. Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, he wrote a song to raise funds for St. Damien. He released a second song last year in response to Hurricane Matthew: [www.haitisrain.org](http://www.haitisrain.org)*

# ST. DAMIEN PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL

## 2016 By the Numbers



Developed in 2013 as part of the St. Damien Collaborative for the Improvement of Pediatrics, the hospital's Residency Program is helping to address the critical shortage of pediatricians in Haiti.

**6** residency program graduates



**72** new cancer cases treated  
**1,102** oncology consults



**2,089** babies delivered  
**5,701** maternity visits  
**3,076** neonatal consults



**15,224** consults



**4,034** admissions

### ABOUT HAITI

Located less than 2,000 miles from the U.S., Haiti is plagued by both political instability and natural disasters. 80% of the population lives below the poverty line, surviving on less than \$2 a day. Access to healthcare is essentially non-existent. According to UNICEF, Haiti has the highest rate of infant, under-five and maternal mortality in the Western Hemisphere. The January 2010 earthquake caused an estimated 300,000 injuries, which exacerbated the limited healthcare services.

- 9,297** Vaccinations
- 4,344** Dental clinic consultations
- 3,478** HIV program consultations
- 2,347** Rehydration center consultations
- 2,109** Emergencies
- 1,709** Tuberculosis consultations
- 1,449** Surgeries performed
- 477** Local people employed



NPH USA is helping save thousands of lives through the support of St. Damien Pediatric Hospital, the nation's premier children's facility.

**None of this would have been possible without your support. Thank you.**

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