



The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain

Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ)

Episcopal Delegate/ Chair: Leela Ramdeen

Justice Desk
The Chancery
Archbishop's House
27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain
Trinidad & Tobago

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Telephone 1-868-622-6680
Mobile 1-868-290-1635; 299-8945
Fax 1-868-622-8372
Email rcsocjus@carib-link.net
Website www.rccsj.org

HAITI – HOW WE CAN HELP

It is too early to assess the full impact of the earthquake that has hit Haiti both in terms of loss of lives, displacement of people and destruction of infrastructure. It is clear however that a disaster of major proportions has occurred in our Caribbean neighbour.

Pope Benedict XVI speaking of the disaster said “I invite everyone to join in my prayer to the Lord for the victims of this catastrophe and for those who are mourning their loss. I assure my spiritual closeness to people who have lost their homes and to all those affected in various ways by this calamity, imploring from God consolation and relief of their suffering”.

He said the Catholic Church’s charity organizations would immediately move into action to assist those most in need adding “I appeal to the generosity of everyone, so that our brothers and sisters receive our concrete solidarity and the effective support of the international community in this moment of need and suffering”.

The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) is heartened by the response of our country's organizations and institutions which are coordinating a national public effort to assist the people of that devastated country. The Commission urges all citizens to contribute to this effort with our well-known generosity.

Haiti is the poorest country in our hemisphere. Average income is said to be US\$480 as compared to US\$7,234 for Trinidad and Tobago. Some 70% of the working population was said to be unemployed, before the earthquake. Haitians were struggling to survive on less than TT\$6 per day. The network of NGO's there played a major role in ensuring the quality of life enjoyed by citizens. The infrastructure of those NGO's is unlikely to have escaped the ravages of the earthquake. It is clear therefore that after the initial relief efforts, sustained rebuilding of both the physical and social infrastructure of the country will be required to ensure that its citizens can enjoy in the future a life to which all children of God are entitled.

The Catholic Commission for Social Justice appeals to regional leaders to play a major role in the reconstruction process and in the development of truly just and democratic structures that are vital for the future success of Haiti. In the words of the late Pope Paul VI **"IF YOU WANT PEACE, WORK FOR JUSTICE"**.