

# St Therese Parish Twin

*Gaspard, Haiti*



Father Julio and his students say "Bonjour".

## SCHOOL LIFE

School life in Gaspard continues through its many challenges. In Fall of 2022, Father Julio reported that approximately 280 children were registered at school. These students come from all over to receive an education. The school also provides a daily lunch meal to support the basic nutritional needs for students. More importantly, says Father Julio, education and school gives the children an alternative to the gang activity that is everywhere. School is a safe place where children can be children.

Despite the natural disasters and the political unrest, the school in Gaspard has remained open, and has even opened the opportunity for higher level middle school learning. "Protecting the children and giving them school is a top priority," Father Julio explains. "The school is the reason so many come. It is the only reason they stay away from gangs, the reason the families stay nearby. When they stay here, they can go to church. They can eat. They can have a future."



Despite the social unrest, violence, and storms, the people of St. Therese gather to worship on Sunday, and to celebrate the newly confirmed members.

## About our Sister Parish

Our sister parish, St. Thérèse, is located in Gaspard, Haiti, on the North side of Haiti, up in the mountainous areas. The sister parish and our project supports a medical clinic in Gaspard, and a second remote clinic in Jean Clair. St. Ambrose also provides incidental support to fund a portion of school teacher salaries and school expenses, supporting some 300 students. Gaspard is home to a rich culture, beautiful landscape, and Caribbean weather. Gaspard is also very vulnerable to natural disasters, extreme poverty, and political instability. Haiti has been declared an unsafe travel destination due to its political instability and rampant violence. And still, the hope of God shines through Father Julio and through the support that St. Ambrose provides to the St. Thérèse parish.



## In Haiti, a crisis of violence, chaos, and cholera goes largely ignored by outside world

*Charities do what they can to help the impoverished nation, but international action is needed to bring order and restore infrastructure, experts on the ground say.*



A mother carries her son as she runs past a burning barricade during a protest against the government in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Friday, Nov. 18, 2022. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

### Trouble in Paradise

**“I am just a simple instrument. I hope to ease some pain in this ocean of misery.” –Father Julio**

Haiti has suffered in the past year from an eruption of gang violence and natural disasters. After the assassination of the President Jovenal Moise, gangs and criminals have committed unprecedented crimes, including murder, theft and property damage, almost without opposition. The relative powerlessness of local government has left citizens stranded. The Jean Clair clinic, further down the mountain from Gaspard and part of the St. Thérèse community, was looted and damaged. Thanks be to God, the nursing staff was not harmed. The main cities across Haiti suffered from protests and violent gang activity. The breakdown in electricity and basic food and supplies has resulted in a crisis. We need everything, he explained in November. “Right now, we just try to survive every day.”

Father Julio notes that things have calmed since their peak in November, but there is still a great deal of unrest and worry. Water, food, gasoline, and personal safety continue to be scarce. Father Julio said they are grateful that their location up in the mountains provided some protection from the violence, though not from the food, water, and supply shortages. He asks all St. Ambrose members to continue to pray for safety and peace, and God’s continued provision. In the meantime, the clinic in Gaspard and the church of St. Thérèse continue to bless the community by providing hope and healing in a time of fear.



Newly restored St Therese Parish Clinic

### The Clinic in Gaspard: a place of healing

The clinic in Gaspard continues its important work providing health care to the people of Gaspard and Jean Clair. In the past six months, the nurses have continued providing basic medical care, but the clinic has also been visited by a volunteer doctor, who saw almost 100 people in three days, as well as a visiting dentist, who treated over 50 of the most urgent dental patients in just one day. These partnerships are made possible through the friendships and generosity of those who serve, volunteering their time and expertise (and climbing up the mountain to do it!) and the financial support of St. Ambrose’s Haiti committee, that purchased the necessary medications for patients being treated.



**Clinic Jean Claire looted and damaged**

### **The clinic in Jean-Clair: Restoring Hope**

Father Julio and the residents of Jean-Clair have worked tirelessly with funding provided by the Haiti supporters of St. Ambrose to install metal bars around windows, and repair the roof. These roofing pieces were carried up the mountain by hand, and repairs made with the generosity of time, talent and treasure of the people of Gaspard and Jean-Clair. Despite the tragedy and the risk, the community of believers came together to build again.

Father Julio states “I just hate to see the pregnant women walking miles up a mountain to receive care because the Jean-Clair clinic is not open.” He prays and asks that the financial resources and laborers will come to complete the repairs of the interior, and to replace the clinic materials so that the Jean-Clair clinic can once again provide the life-saving medical care it performed before the gang violence and looting.



**Community members volunteering to repair clinic**

## Looking Ahead

Our Sister Parish thanks all the St. Ambrose parishioners for your support as brothers and sisters in Christ. With careful prayer and consideration, our sister parish has several projects to address long-term goals and sustainability in their community:

- 1) Install solar power and protective equipment to reduce the dependance on gasoline or diesel, which is very expensive and not always available. This solar project would protect the clinic so they can keep temperature controlled medicines and vaccines, and also provide power for rectory, internet, and the nurse's station. It would also reduce Father Julio trips/time away from community.
- 2) Repair water cisterns. A water cistern system was built to protect water supplies and prevent illnesses like cholera, which is currently prevalent in Haiti. Weather have damaged the pipes; repairs are needed to restore this critical resource.
- 3) Repair the bakery. Gaspard has a bakery, capable of baking bread and basic necessities for the people, that has suffered damage. Repairs to the bakery would provide access to basic food resources and economic opportunity for the community.
- 4) Vehicle Repairs. Father Julio's truck, a resource of St. Thérèse parish, is the only vehicle in Gaspard. It serves as transportation of goods, ambulance, and taxi for those physically unable to go up and down the mountain.
- 5) Re-Open the Jean Clair Clinic: "To get to Gaspard is like mountain climbing", Father Julio says. "I just think of the pregnant women climbing to receive medical services." Finishing the repairs and financially supporting the staff of the Jean-Clair clinic would support the health of the community further down the mountain, providing critical services to more of our sister parish's members.
- 6) Partner with Solidarity Haiti organization to finish school construction project.

**These projects will require special contributions or fundraising. If you feel led to fundraise or financially support our sister parish, reach out to a member of the Haiti committee, or give online. Donations made for the Haiti committee can be made through St. Ambrose Parish and qualify as a tax-deductible contribution. You can give online thru the St.Ambrose website or you can mark an envelope with "Haiti" and drop in collection basket or drop it off or mail it into to parish office.**

**Please keep St. Thérèse and all the people of Haiti in your prayers.**

**Thank you again for your continued support. When you offer your prayers, your time, your talents, and your treasure, you are serving as the hands and feet of Christ!**



Parish Twinning Program of the Americas

To join our quarterly committee, contact John Rennekamp ([rennekampfam@cinergymetro.net](mailto:rennekampfam@cinergymetro.net)). You may also contact the St Ambrose Parish Office and Leticia will put you in contact with us.