

HMI first began building homes in the Jeremie region of Haiti in April 2008. The homes were constructed based on a model put together by Father Jomanas Eustache in coordination with an architect and engineer. The homes were solid concrete foundation with smooth coat cinder block finish. The expense to build these homes began at \$10,000 and by June 2012 (because of the jump in material costs due to the January 2010 earthquake) had risen to \$12,500. At that price tag, HMI was only able to build seventeen homes over the five year period. We knew that if we were going to be able to help more families, we needed to make an effort to redesign the homes and make them more cost effective. We could see the difference the new homes were making for the families who received them and we desperately wanted to help more people. And then God stepped in and introduced us to Fr. Meaux.

We first met with Fr. Meaux at Applebee's restaurant in St. Martinville, LA. when he was in the states for an R&R and fundraising visit. He was gracious enough to invite us to visit his mission and compound in Kobonal, Haiti. In February 2013, my husband David and I traveled to Haiti with Deacon Lloyd Duplantis and his wife Faie to spend time with Fr. Glenn and get a better understanding about the Kobonal Mission, the workings of Cross Catholic International and more specifically, their home building project. We were able to witness firsthand what Cross Catholic and Fr. Meaux had been able to achieve. We set about making changes to the way that we were building homes and eventually came up with a structure that was very similar to the homes built near Kobonal. (We had been friends with Bishop Sam Jacobs since he came to Houma. Prior to meeting with Fr. Meaux, we spoke with Bishop Sam concerning our efforts to raise money to build homes in Haiti. Being on the Board of Directors of Cross Catholic International and being a personal friend of Fr. Meaux, he suggested that we contact them to get some advice and assistance.)

While in Kobonal we met, "Bingo", Fr. Meaux's second-in-command and several members of their construction team. We came up with a plan to have them travel to Jeremie and to assist Dr. David and Deacon Lloyd in setting up the procedures for our "new" Kobanol/Numero Deux Model Homes. They helped train our construction foreman and crews and built three homes in three weeks. Following their guidance, we were able to reduce the cost from \$12,500 to \$7,500 per home while maintaining the quality that we felt was needed. Since the institution of our new model homes in July of 2013, by January 2020 we had built a total of 175 homes! (As of that date, we were building three homes per month.) At the cost per house (at that time) of \$7,500, the yearly silent auction goes a long way towards raising the necessary funds - but not all the way. We have been blessed the past few years with a few major donors who have helped offset the extra we have needed. (The money that we raise in our silent auction is dedicated as matching money for house building donations. That allows the donors to dedicate a house for \$3750 with the remaining \$3750 needed to complete the house supplied by the silent auction donations.)

We will be forever grateful to Fr. Meaux, his construction team, Cross Catholic International and Almighty God for helping us put together this incredibly efficient and effective way of getting so many people out of misery and into a functional degree of poverty that will allow them to grow and develop into the dignity that God intended for us all. Laura Fakier.

(Dr David and Laura Fakier are the chair persons for the Haiti Mission, Inc. annual Silent Auction. The Silent Auction raises matching funds dedicated to build homes for the people who live in the villages outside of Jeremie, Haiti. The Fakiers have traveled to Haiti over 30 times since 2009 and have personally seen the deplorable conditions in which many, if not most, of the inhabitants of the villages live. They have also witnessed again and again the difference that building a home for a family makes in the lives of several generations. In their words, "It changes everything!")