EASTER APPEAL

We are always praying for our benefactors, but at certain times of year this prayer is intensified. So it is with the Easter Season. If there is anyone—living or dead—who you wish to commend to our prayer, jot their names on the enclosed prayer list and send it back to us.

No offering is required, but any offering received will be used for the day-to-day needs of Moreau Seminary and Holy Cross House.

Please note: this is not an appeal for Haiti. You have no doubt given through your parish already. If you can help the Province meet its day-to-day needs, that will free up more resources from other Province funds that can go to Haiti.
The earthquake that destroyed Port-au-Prince and the surrounding area struck at 5:00 PM on Tuesday, January 12. What follows are excerpts from e-mails that were sent out to all members of Holy Cross in the days afterwards. They provide a first-hand glimpse into how different lives were affected, a glimpse not provided by the news media. The e-mails are reproduced as received; spelling and grammar are unchanged, because the native language of the CSC’s in Haiti is French. As you will see, the Catholic Church in Haiti had a huge loss of lives and property. Fr. Michel Eugene, CSC, whose name appears often, is the Superior of the CSC Priests in Haiti.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

At 3:53 AM the next morning, the Holy Cross community received first word from our Superior General, Fr. Hugh Cleary, CSC: We have been trying to establish contact with our Holy Cross community in Haiti but so far we have been unsuccessful. Father Eric Jasmin, C.S.C., has been here in Rome for the General Council meetings this past week. He is doing all that is possible to ascertain information about our religious and the Cross sisters.

Sr. Rosemond Marcelin, CSC 10:47 AM: I’m still dazed from the catastrophe of this earthquake. I just woke up from a long night outdoors, sleeping alongside my scholasticate confreres, happily spared by this tragedy. Some of us had time to visit our confreres in Turgeau right after the huge jolt. They were found to be out of danger, all of them in a terrible state of shock. Only the provincial was not there, having gone to a meeting, but we are certain that he is alright, protected by Providence. The brothers of Basile Moreau are safe and sound, except that the high school building collapsed, burying some students watching a soccer game. At the scholasticate, we’ve been hurt only by the loss of an exterior wall separating us from the main street. We are all here, except for Guillaume who had gone to class in Quisquesua and is probably still on the street trying to come back through the ruins and the bodies.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

Fr. Eric Jasmin, CSC 7:45 AM: Fr. Bernard Antoine informs that the dead body of our temporary professo, Emmanuel Jacques Guillaume has been found under the debris at of university Quisqueya. Our provincial house (or what is left from it) and its yard are now filled with people seeking aid/help. Fr. Yvon Joseph has sent a SOS to Fr. Bernard Antoine saying that they are out of water and food. Fr. Bernard hurried to send a pick-up filled with water, food and other things which is on its way to Port-au-Prince. Only God knows if everything will arrive at destination because many people who are starving try to deprive any car found in the streets loaded with food.

Fr. Michel Eugene, CSC 1:17 PM: For those who heard I was missing until Wednesday noon, I can say that I am alive and without any physical harm. I was not in the provincial office on Tuesday at 16.53. I could only return on foot to Turgeau (location of the provincial offices) by Wednesday noon to look after our confreres and determine the following:

GOOD NEWS: 1. No one died or was injured at Turgeau, a small miracle. 2. The guest house apparently was hit by the quake; we need to check it out, but it seems that it is not damaged. 3. There were no deaths at Bizoton (Ecole Basile Moreau, Scolasticat Basile Moreau) nor at Waney (Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish); our scholastics left unhurt from CIFOR which is common, his compusour, his discretion, his zeal for work, his empathy, the quality of his religious commitment, his faith, his faith in the future of Haiti and his love for Holy Cross. This is the first time since the arrival of Holy Cross in Haiti that we mourn the death of a young religious. A marble sculpture will be placed in the Holy Cross cemetery in Cap-Haitien to perpetuate his memory.

Port-au-Prince is trying to get back on its feet in spite of immense concerns. There is no evidence that the authorities understand that they cannot be content with merely patching up the city so that it might be almost as bad as it has been these past decades. Courageous, unpopular, and in some aspects, radical measures are needed. Emergency assistance is distributed anarchically. In this sense the non-governmental organizations do not have any more success than the government. Confidence in the NGO’s capacity to bring assistance to the most needy dwindles. There are several accounts of persons who died during these past days out of despite. For the most part, they are of the middle class, natives of Port-au-Prince, who refuse to go and fight for food relief. This is a new category of the poor falling into greater danger. Among them are relatives of Holy Cross religious, people from our parishes, students as well as alumni of our educational institutions.

We have begun to develop ways to fill the gap in order to reach them. With our meager means we are trying to help them, especially those at Turgeau but also at Bizoton and Waney. Fortunately, we have received help from the Cooperation Jesuite. We have been able to bring relief to a large number of people for a few days. More and more religious communities are seen as sure means of bringing urgent help to the population. The distribution of primary relief items received from the Jesuits witnesses to this.

Furthermore, we are making repeated attempts in the North for the resumption of academic activities in order to return as quickly as possible to normal. This is one of the surest strategies to metabolize the trauma from the deadly quakes of January 12. We will receive in our schools children who are victims of the Port-au-Prince quakes. We are seeking ways to finance their studies. Their parents are either dead, injured or they have lost everything in Port-au-Prince. At College Notre Dame, the religious are gathering together the young victims of Port-au-Prince who are originally from Cap Haitien in order to help them bounce back. This same initiative is undertaken in our parishes in Borgne, Caracol, Pilate, and Petit Bourg-de-Borgne.

I should have mentioned this at the beginning, but Turgeau, Bizoton, and Waney are neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince. Cap-Haitien is on the north coast, 40 minutes by plane from the capital.

Did you catch the first movements of Easter and new life in these accounts? For myself, the most moving statement was: “We shed our tears, lived, hurt, but know we are not alone. Many things will be changed forever, but life will go on because we know we are loved by a Divine Presence in our midst.” That statement was the one that got me thinking about using these e-mails for the Easter newsletter.

After the crucifixion, the disheartened disciples felt so alone and abandoned. That changed to joy when they experienced the presence of the Risen Jesus. Note how often those e-mails express a deep gratitude for the simple ministry for our presence with them in prayer. It’s the same consolation the women and the beloved disciple extended to Jesus as he was dying. They could do nothing but “be there.” So often when someone we love is suffering, we wonder what we can do. Never underestimate the enormous value of your simple presence and prayer.
other urgent needs like getting electricity up and running. People are having to come to terms with the inevitable...many loved ones are lost.

I must go. I am constantly being bothered by our “live-in” guests so thank you again for your love, caring and solidarity. God bless and keep you. Please excuse all errors I do not have time to re-read this letter.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

Fr. Michel Eugene, CSC  Two weeks after the deadly earthquakes, Port-au-Prince is giving the impression of a return to life. This is thanks to the resumption of certain commercial activities and the availability of fuel. In certain main streets of the capital were it not for the pulverized buildings, the scars of the earthquake, one would have the impression that everything has returned to normal. This early “return to normal” is also most probably due to the formidable resilience of the Haitian people. Most of the houses built of concrete to withstand cyclones and seismic temblors lower than 6.0 on the Richter scale have given way. As a result, a good number of religious are living on the streets like the families in Port-au-Prince.

The time has already come for us to make a first assessment, to begin seriously to bind up the deep wounds and to face construction for the future. In addition to their mission of accompanying the people and stimulating the Haitian Church that was struck in its very heart, the religious men and women of Haiti must face the difficult and distressing reality of their respective congregations. They have for the most part counted mainly on the income from their schools for self financing. Now these schools have crumbled and our insurance companies owe us nothing in situations of natural catastrophes.

Holy Cross along with the congregations of priests and the diocese must find a solution for continuing the philosophical and theological formation of candidates for the priesthood. The major seminary is reduced to a mass of rubble. It is the same at CIFOR. These institutions will not be able to get back on their feet in the days, even months to come. We have already begun to draw up scenarios. Some involve a close cooperation with other congregations to create one or two temporary structures while at the same time working to rebuild CIFOR and taking part in the rebuilding of the major seminary.

We must accompany and offer alternatives in formation to approximately twenty young men. Several Holy Cross scholastics find it difficult to live with this insecure situation and they impatiently await solutions from us. For the time being we have taken the conservative decision to send them to local communities in the north so they can recuperate while at the same time make themselves useful. At the moment they do not know where or when they will be able to continue their philosophical or theological formation.

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6

Fr. Michel Eugene, CSC: On February 2nd, we celebrated the funeral of our confrere, Emmanuel Jacques Guillaume in the parish church of Acul-du-Nord. The scholastics and a large majority of the men and women of Holy Cross located in the North came to the home parish of Emmanuel Jacques Guillaume to draw comfort from each other and to comfort the members of his family. During the moving and prayerful service we expressed our grief, our hope and especially our gratitude for all the Lord has given us through the life of Emmanuel Jacques Guillaume.

His classmate, the members of his family and other religious of Holy Cross who witnessed during the ceremony unanimously emphasized his simplicity, his seriousness, his sense of responsibility, his lively intelli-

BAD NEWS: 1. One scholastic has not responded to calls. He was taking a class at Quisqueya University. All the main university buildings crumbled like a house of cards. We have not yet identified his body... we are not sure we will be able to do this as bodies are already decaying under the debris.

2. The provincial administration offices no longer exist. The reinforced ground floor did not give way completely. There is the possibility of gathering up documents but the building cannot be used. We are miserable. Apart from the documents on the ground floor and the things in my room, we have lost everything. The secondary section of the Ecole-College Basile Moreau no longer exists; the primary section is cracked and is most likely no longer useable. The residence for the religious is unharmed but the ground floor is cracked. The preschool does not have a place.

I will stop here for the moment. I will return with more news soon. In the midst of our misfortune at Bizoton 53 as at Turgeau we are sheltering a number of refugees, in particular the entire Oblate Community of Haiti. We are trying hard to feed them, to keep them alive....
A Holy Cross priest stopped by to see us here in Cap-Haitian this afternoon. He arrived from Port-au-Prince yesterday. He said he could walk on the main street for blocks and blocks and look at the sea. That is how flattened the city is. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and solidarity. We shed tears, we hurt, but know we are not alone. Many things will be changed forever, but life will go on because we know we are loved by a Divine Presence in our midst.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17
Sr. Lucienne Landry, CSC 2:54 PM The number of persons in the yard has grown every day. There may be as many as 200, but some will leave today. Presently, Sister Maureen is trying to get the water pump going. This is what is lacking the most. There is no fuel. No pumps are functioning yet.

MONDAY, JANUARY 18
Fr. Michel Eugene, CSC 3:48 PM: In the name of the Province of Haiti, I sincerely express our gratitude for all the signs of affection and the Masses celebrated yesterday and during the week for Haiti and for the Holy Cross religious of Haiti. We need this solidarity to hold on and to get going again. This is all you can do for the time being. What we need now is to know that we are not forgotten and that you are in solidarity with your Haitian confreres. Our refugees: some have left and others have come to us. The Oblates have left and have gone to one of their houses in the area of Petite-Place-Cazeau. The seminarians have returned to their respective dioceses. Relatives and families of some confreres are passing through Turgeau. Every day we are receiving some and we organize departures for the north. Former parish members come to us as do our employees and their families living in Port-au-Prince.

Sunday evening we were able to free the main entrance to CIFOR and get the generator and the three minibuses belonging to Holy Cross, the Oblates and the religious of St. Camillus. There were several attempts on the part of looters to steal them. This operation opened the way to freeing the bodies of deceased seminarians. During the course of the afternoon the heavy equipment of CNE helped move the blocks of concrete. Steps have been taken to recuperate material from CIFOR before the looters return. In addition to what we are doing at Turgeau, Bizoton and CIFOR, we are helping in the organization of relief. We are counting soon on offering our experience in the area of psychological help to the people.