



**A message from
Judith Schaum, SSND**

Dear Colleagues,

In "You Are Sent", the constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it is written in paragraph 14: "Deep faith and high courage urged Mother Theresa to risk already meager resources to satisfy needs wherever she was called. In her spirit we respond to God's call expressed in our times." This was certainly true of Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline as they opened schools and orphanages throughout Europe and North America. It is also true of School Sisters of Notre Dame today.

In the 2012 document titled "Love Cannot Wait", it is stated: "We are profoundly affected and challenged by the many divisions in our world and church today and by the social, economic and ecological crises of our times." Surely there are many needs in our time that could benefit from the SSND educational vision. Which ones could serve as our focus for the next few years?

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Clean Water



The water we drink today has very probably been around in one form or another since dinosaurs lived on earth millions of years ago. The amount of available fresh water has remained fairly constant but the population has exploded. This results in a competition for clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing and sustaining life.

For some of us, water scarcity is an abstract concept but to others it is a stark reality. Due to

"We are profoundly affected and challenged by the many divisions in our world and church today and by the social, economic and ecological crises of our times."

geography, climate, engineering, regulation, and competition for resources, some regions seem relatively flush with freshwater, while others face drought and debilitating pollution. In much of the developing world, clean water is either hard to come by

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Facts about water:

- 1** 97% of the planet earth is water but only 2.5% is fresh.
- 2** The bottled water industry has blocked legislative efforts to protect local water rights.
- 3** One in nine people globally do not have access to clean drinking water.

Children are most vulnerable to water-borne diseases.



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The sisters of the Atlantic-Midwest Province engaged in a prayerful dialogue concerning these many needs and decided on four with the acronym WITH: water, immigration, trafficking, Haiti. Is your curiosity piqued? Did you know that water is expected to become increasingly scarce in the future? What can we do to ensure that everyone has access to clean water?

We are all very much aware of the migration of people from their homelands to other countries that provide safer environments. Is there anything we can do to ensure immigrant justice and safety?

In an early letter written by Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, she wrote about her concern for

children who were victims of the African slave trade. Unfortunately, trafficking of people continues today. What difference can we make to stop this atrocity?

Catholic schools are present throughout Haiti, yet only 255 of their teachers have been educated beyond eighth grade. Is there an organization we can partner with to help raise the quality of education in Haiti?

In this newsletter as well as in the next one we will examine these issues and invite you to collaborate with us in these four province commitments. In this issue we examine water and Haiti.

It is appropriate that we consider these topics during this new

year that our Holy Father has titled, A Holy Year of Mercy. Pope Francis wrote: "Brothers and sisters, let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God." (A Year with Pope Francis, edited by Alberto Rossa, CMF, page 216)

In Blessed Theresa's words, I pray: "I commend you to the Holy Spirit, through the powerful intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary, and I entrust you forever into her blessed hands." Happy new year!

Sincerely,



Judith Schaum, SSND
Ministry Services,
Associate Director
jschaum@amssnd.org



Clean Water

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or a commodity that requires laborious work or significant currency to obtain.

According to the United Nations, water use has grown at more than twice the rate of population increase in the last century. By 2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people will live in areas plagued by water scarcity, with two-thirds of the world's population living in water-stressed regions as a result of use, growth, and climate change. The challenge we now face is how to effectively conserve, manage and distribute the water we have. ■

What
can we do?

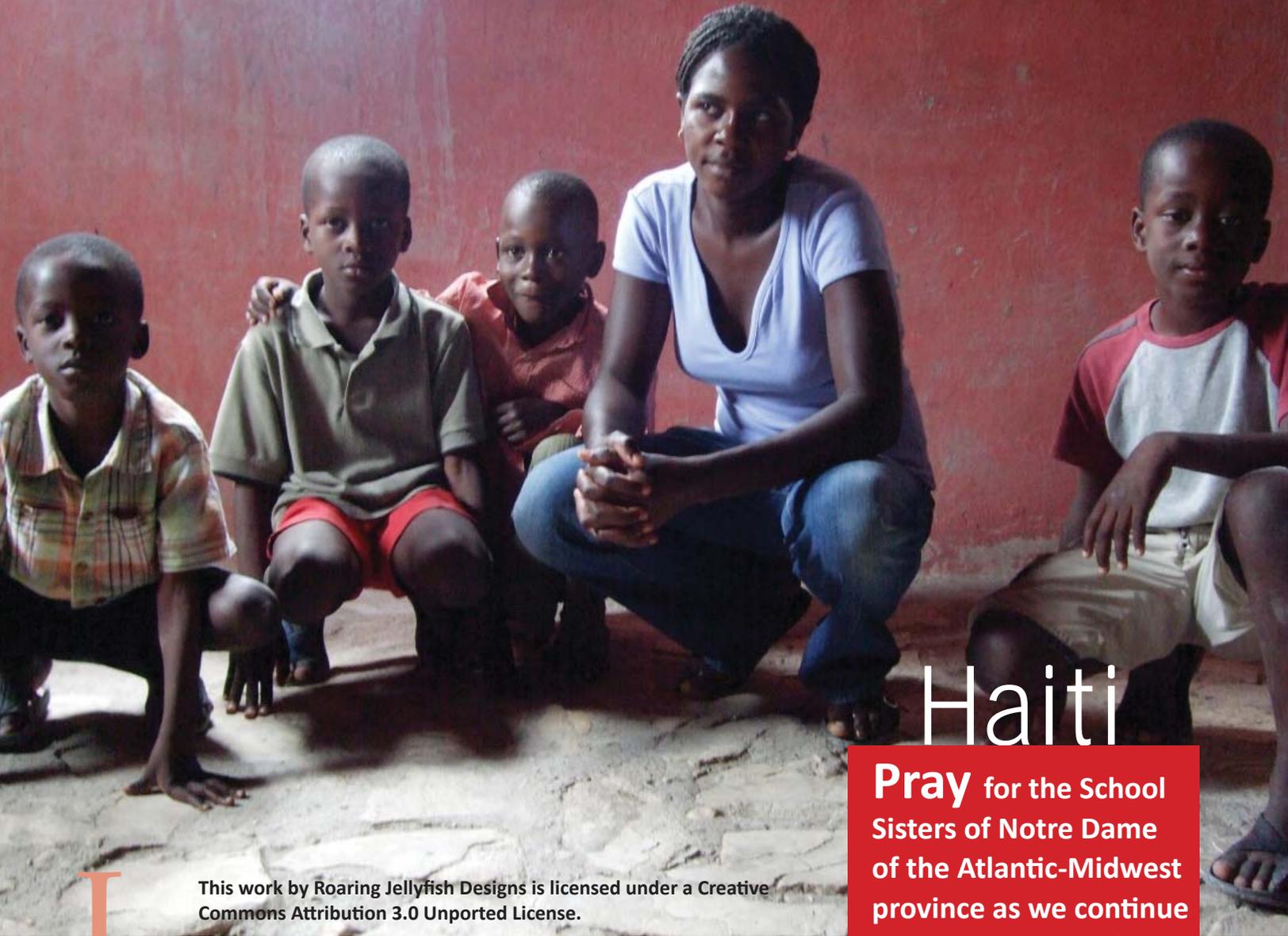
Will you do
your part to
change the
situation?

Will you join with the School Sisters in educating people about the water crisis?

- **Drink** tap water instead of bottled water.
- **Consider** ways to conserve water in your home (take shorter showers, repair dripping faucets, don't waste water by letting it run, for example).
- **Advocate** for renewable energy technologies.
- **Use** car washes that recycle the water.
- **Encourage** the protection of our wetlands.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, visit the following:

www.education.nationalgeographic.com/media/earths-fresh-water/ or www.water.org/water-crisis/water-facts/water/



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Haiti

Pray for the School Sisters of Notre Dame of the Atlantic-Midwest province as we continue to pursue partnerships with organizations working to improve education in Haiti.

In one of Blessed Theresa's letters, she wrote: "A well-educated teacher can more easily accept persons where they are and help them than one who is inadequately educated; good will does not supply for lack of confidence." These are strong words from an educator who insisted that her teachers be well prepared for the classroom.

Catholic parish schools account for 15 percent of all the schools in Haiti while public schools account for only 12 percent. The rest of the schools are private schools administered by various religious groups. Because there are so many Catholic school leaders, they have the

capability to work for systemic change in the educational system.

In the early 1900s the Haitian government pledged financial support to the Church to open and operate schools especially for children living in poor areas. Unfortunately this support has been rare and sporadic. The Catholic schools continue to serve the neediest children, but even before the earthquake of 2010, the educational system in Haiti was the worst in the Americas.

In Haiti, the quality of education is critical for the future of the country. Yet only 25 percent of Catholic school elementary teachers have received

education beyond eighth grade. The vast majority of schools are not accredited and therefore they are not eligible for subsidies.

It seems obvious that a teacher training program would be a great asset in Haiti to ensure quality education for the children. This would require 500 hours of classwork over a three year period at approximately \$2,500 per teacher.

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Haiti

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Here are some facts about education in Haiti:

- There are 2,315 Catholic schools in Haiti serving more than 602,000 students.
- The earthquake of 2010 heightened the educational crisis.
- 50 percent of the Haitian population is illiterate.
- The scarcity of qualified teachers is among the most pressing problems related to schools. ■



- **Learn** more about Haiti and its educational system. See website given below.
- **Pray** for the School Sisters of Notre Dame of the Atlantic-Midwest Province as we continue to pursue partnerships with organizations working to improve education in Haiti.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, visit www.beyondborders.org.

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Judith Schaum, SSND, Director of Ministry Services
410-377-7774 Ext. 1107 | jschaum@amssnd.org