

Christian Hand Response to Haiti Earthquake

(JANUARY 24TH TO JANUARY 30TH, 2010)

GOD dont forget your children

By Ludny Pierre, Journalist and Christian Hand secretary/writer



Its a 4:00am on a Wednesday morning in Port-au Prince Haiti. The sky is dark. the air is cool, and the city is silent. "Leve namn mouin ak soley la..." A voice deep with passion and struggle breaks the silence. "Konmansme tach ou jodi a..." The voice is anonymous, yet distinctive, floating over the city from one makeshift sleeping bag among many others lying on the city streets. Another voice soon joins, this one broken but proud. While I cannot see her, I imagine she is crying. "Premie bagay ou gin pou fe..." Before long the entire city is singing. A choir of Gods children, praising, and praying. "Se lou Bon-Dieu ak tout Ke".... "Wake my soul with the sun, Let me start everyday, with the first thing i should do, Praise the Lord with all my heart"

On Jan. 12th 2010, an earthquake of 7.6 magnitude, struck the already impoverished island country of Haiti. Leaving hundreds of thousands homeless, motherless, dead, and in desperate need of a hand. Christian Hand, a non-profit organization offered that hand, taking a group of 27 volunteers, medical professionals, and helping hands, to respond to their dire needs in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. I went with them.

The entire city is homeless. The streets are lined with tents, and sheets, children, and mothers, brothers and fathers, dust and rubble. The people walk wearing masks, to supress the smell of death in the air. "When will you go back into your home" I asked Daniel, a Port-au-Prince native and recent newlywed. "I cannot say, I did not know when the earthquake was coming, so I cannot say when I can go back into my house." He and his wife have found refuge with other families in a lot next to one of the city's radio station. For one week we were one of them, sleeping on the streets. The first morning, my soul woke before I did to the sounds of the people praising God. It was moving to say the least. The sound in the air could stir soul the could of a deaf man. We would wake this way for the entire week.



Our medical fair was stationed in the near by church lot and before we could even fully set up we were seeing patient after patient. Many of which, suffered major injuries relating to the earthquake though it had been two weeks since. Injuries included broken legs, broken hands, and infections. When one came in with a bone showing and infected in her leg, we asked her why she had waited two weeks to have it looked at, she responded she did not know where to go or have the money. Another seriously injured patient came in with leaves wrapped around her injuries, informing us that she had only seen a traditional doctor in the area. Almost everyone suffered from urinary track infections, dehydration, both from lack of clean water, and hunger. One child said to us “My leg is hurting me so bad, but everytime I eat something it goes away.” We fed him he smiled, and went on his way.



The night it almost rained was the saddest experience. As the clouds darkened the thunder clapped, and the rain began to drizzle, the city lifted their voices to God, crying and wailing with the wind. As though they were having a conversation God and bargaining. God heard us, and for that night at least, we slept on dry ground.



Everyday we gave all we could, using the many donations we received prior to the trip including medical supplies, foods and more. While we had so much, it was not enough. On the fourth day we decided to prepare a hot meal for the people living in what was called “tent city”. Preparing over 500 plates we headed over to give what we could. Attempting to line up the fast growing crowd, we quickly realized that it would never feed everyone, they realized that too. No one who got on the line we requested did not receive a plate. It was those who reached, pulled and sadly fought for a plate who received. It was so hurtful to see, but humbling and enlightening. These people were not just fighting for a plate, they were fighting for their three kids, hungry and looking to them to provide, they were fighting because even if they did eat earlier, they did not know when/ where their next meal was coming from, they were fighting out of embarrassment that while they may have once been able to provide themselves, they now have no

choice now but to wait in line for hand outs covering their faces at the flashes of cameras and onlookers, they were fighting for survival. We were fighting back tears. It felt good knowing that we were able to help over 500 people for those few days, but it hurt more knowing that there was so many more we could not help.



"I am blessed" Sr. Therese, a native woman staying within our camp said. So blessed, you don't understand how many people I saw lying dead, and I am still here. It is to say how great the Lord is" With all their perils, all their tribulations, this blessed theme was common with many of the people I spoke with. While their lives were visually low, their spirits were high, praising, thanking and waiting on God. I guess the Haitian people know the same secret Job knew: that even in suffering, God is worthy to be praised. He will bless you twice over, and expand your territory. "Lou Bon-Dieu ak tout Ke"- Praise the Lord with all your heart.



Christian Hand is a non-profit organization, who bi-annually take trips to Haiti, to minister, educate, and provide medical attention to the Haitian people. (www.christianhand.org)