

Message to the Major Superiors Haitian Religious Conference

*« I know the source which springs forth and overflows
in the darkness of night... »*

Dear Religious of Haiti,

A year ago, from the 25th to the 29th of May 2011, following the earthquake which devastated the entire population of Haiti, we were about twenty Major Superiors from Canada present at that time in Haiti at the *Foyer de Charité Sainte-Marie* with our Council Members. Our intention was to live with you, religious of Haiti, a *“Visitation of solidarity”* in order to journey with the members of our respective congregations in their efforts to overcome the terrible physical, material and psychological losses affecting everyone. Having carried this project with the Director of the CHR for such a long time, through it all, we have been guided by Saint John of the Cross, mystique and prophet, who knew how to recognize hope as *“the source which springs forth and overflows especially in the dead of night”*.

Even in the midst of the numerous challenges of your country in distress, during this assembly, we have perceived your great desire to “build religious life in Haiti on solid rock”. We have offered you our fraternal affection and our solidarity. With you, we wished to journey toward our source, Jesus, who during the night rolled away the stone himself and sprang forth from the tomb to call us by name and send us on a mission of hope in the midst of His people. Together, we have met Him and recognized Him... Once more, He has been present particularly in the faces of the earthquake’s victims: in the faces of orphans, of the physically and psychologically handicapped, in the face of abused women, in the numerous families still struggling for survival in tents. We have seen Him also in the faces of different groups and persons who have accompanied the victims with compassion and creativity. He has invited us to share the wealth of our particular charism in order to be a mystical and prophetic witness to our people, to network and to make of the January 12th 2010 earthquake not an impediment but rather a new beginning for our Religious Life. (Orientations adopted at the end of the meeting of solidarity).

A year later, we are happy to hear you reaffirm your commitment to *“Build Religious Life in Haiti on solid rock and in solidarity”*. Regardless of distance, all through the year, we have tried to embrace your dreams, your projects, and your struggles. Our wish was to continue the journey with you, to encourage and sustain your efforts, to build a Religious Life capable of fostering its prophetic dimension out of its mystical heart. We are convinced that here as in Haiti, “the future of religious life is in the strength of its mystical and prophetic roots.” As the American Benedictine Joan Chittister has suggested, this future can only take shape in solidarity... a boundless, honest, cordial solidarity...

And thus we are happy to see the resurrection of the **Annual Congress of the CHR**, such an important meeting place to build solidarity among Congregations

and to foster networking with those intent on the same projects as you carry...We are also happy to see the **Theological Commission of the CHR** come to life again, a commission that will certainly help you to better grasp God at work in the life of your people and how to continue reflecting together on the mystical-prophetic reality in the context of Religious Life in distress. We rejoice also to see all the dynamism of the **Education Commission**... Surely, like Elias, in your cave, you have experienced being destabilized by God in order to recognize Him in the gentle breeze and to receive from Him your mission for your people (1 Kings 19, 9-18)....What a grace to celebrate!... No doubt, together you can find many other motives to rejoice in God's work throughout the year, in your Congregations, in the CHR, in the Church and in the midst of the people of Haiti.

For our part, we are happy to have mobilized the Religious Congregations of Quebec to respond to **Father William Smarth's appeal for the CIFOR LIBRARY**. More than the collection of books and bookstands, already being routed to Port-au-Prince, what gives us greater pleasure is to have kept vivid the situation of Haiti in the hearts of the Religious of Quebec who responded concretely to the appeal and did so in solidarity. In the process, we also have reinforced links among ourselves and this is good news for the Religious Life of Canada.

As we bring to mind the "*Visitation of Solidarity*", we remain closely united to your great desire to "*rebuild Religious Life in Haiti on solid rock and in solidarity*". In all humility we hope to accompany your journey and engage ourselves in concrete gestures inspired by the One who has already rolled away the stone and who repeats: "*Do not be afraid!...you will see Him there, the crucified One... He is no longer here, He is alive... He precedes you in Galilee and you will see Him there.*" (Mt. 28, 5-7) Yes, it is among the Galileans of Haiti that He awaits us in order to gather us and to bless us in the Spirit for the mission confided to each one of us. TOGETHER, let us go forth in hope, filled with this certitude!

United to you in heart, in prayer and in our efforts,

The members of the Canadian Group CHR/UISG

Sisters Claudette Morin, mcr
Diane Beaudoin, scsh
Kathryn Rutan, sp
Kesta Occident, csc
Lorraine Desjardins, sco
Louise Denis, mic
Louise Gauthier, ssj
Nicole Jégo, scsl
Pierrette Bertrand, ofsj
Ramona Castillo, ndps
Rita Larivée, ssa
Thérèse Meunier, csj
Suzanne Bridet, sfa

Véronique Tshilemba, mcr
Monique Prudhomme, ssa
Claudette Jacques, scsh
Lise Chabot, scsh
Annette Noël, sp
Yolande Campbell, sco
Emmanuella Vincent, mic
Jeannine Jean, ssj
Thérèse Grasland, scsl
Elisa Fernandez, sfa
Ghislaine Landry, sp