



"ON MY MIND"
BY
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A column of reflections and news from Trinity Church,
Hackettstown, NJ

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Good day,

His name was Jeffrey. At 6 months old he was as cute as any little baby. But he was small for his age, as most Haitian babies are.

I met Jeffrey in a village in Haiti last week. We had traveled to his community on the banks of Lake Azuei, on the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, to meet Christians there, take some birthing kits for their midwives...and other gifts, and to visit the church connected to the Light and Peace Ministry that we support.

This is a typically poor village. There is little if any work for employment, there are no stores or places to buy things, and if there were, no one would have any money to buy them. Food is grown locally...when the white stony earth will support crops. Animals are raised for consumption (a pig wandered past me rooting in the earth as I stood outdoors brushing my teeth early in the morning)...and we were given some of their best food in the form of goat meat for both dinner and breakfast!

Children run about in tattered clothes...some barefoot...all thin...many looking sick...and according to health studies, almost all suffering from internal intestinal parasites and worms.

Few older people are seen...life expectancy in Haiti is 62, and even that surprises me given the high infant mortality rate. Johnny was the oldest man I saw all week, about 70. I shared my breakfast of goat and plantains with him while we chatted through my broken Spanish.

The church has created a school, and on our visit the open, stone-floored sanctuary was used as a classroom, since our team was given their 4 classrooms in another building in which to sleep on the cement floor. Children are given the very basics of an education - there are no textbooks, and my guess is that few gain even a 4th grade mastery. About half of all Haitians cannot read or write.

We were in the village for one night and started to leave at 9:30 the next morning.

That's when I saw Jeffrey and his mother. She had been talking to Marie, our Trinity team member who grew up in Haiti and who has lived in the states for 25 years. She speaks fluent Creole. And Jeffrey's mom had been talking to her and 2 other of the women on our team.

These ladies seemed upset as we made our way to the bus.

Jeffrey's mom had asked them to take him with us.

She was ready to give away her baby boy!!

You can't imagine a person doing that. A mother or father ready to give their child to a stranger.

But that happened to us 3 or 4 times in Haiti that week.

And why?

Because these Haitian parents know that they can't take care of their children...feed them...give them medicine when they are sick. Some parents don't even name their child until their first birthday, just to see if they will live! Ten percent die before age 5.

We of course had to say no to Jeffrey's mom. And we got on the bus with sad and heavy hearts.

And with two questions that we wrestled with in our devotions and sharing time each evening when our team gathered together.

1. Why were WE born into the wealth, security, opportunity and blessing that is OUR life...and why are some children born in Haiti, with all of its devastation? Do we somehow deserve all that we have, and the Haitian children do not???
2. Since we WERE born into such blessing, must we not share it generously and sacrificially with others? Is it right to keep it for ourselves when so many suffer?

I ask you to ponder those questions. They lead to the heart of our biblical faith and Jesus' command -

"EVERY ONE TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN, OF HIM OR HER MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED."

Please prayerfully consider these things. They are at the center of how we live as a disciples of Jesus Christ.

And...please pray for Jeffrey.



Together in Christ's service,
Frank

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