



May 1, 2023

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ from The Diocese of Richmond, VA,

Greetings from the Diocese of Hinche, Haiti. My sincere thanks to His Excellency Bishop Barry Knestout for inviting me to share time with him, and to have the opportunity to share time with you here in the Diocese of Richmond. I can assure you that bishops are always busy. Bishop Knestout's brotherly care for me is a reflection of his pastoral heart. I look forward to my visit and share these thoughts in advance. Thanks to all of you for your desire to be with me. I know your lives are full, and it warms my heart to have you with me. I have had the joy of meeting most of you previously. I consider you my old friends. For those of you whom I meet for the first time, you are my new friends.

I come to you from a dangerous country. Each time I travel, I pray for my safe passage. It is a country where gangs control much of the capital city, and where anybody - a businessperson, a politician, an academic, and yes, a priest or a bishop is at risk of being kidnapped or shot at any time. Just three weeks ago, gunmen kidnapped two people from within the chapel at the home of the Archbishop of Port-au-Prince as he was celebrating Mass. Gang violence, the shortage of basic goods, terrible inflation, a government that does not function, corruption, and a police force that is outgunned have us in the most desperate state that Haiti has ever known. I can't tell you how sad it makes me to say this about my country. The place where I was born and raised, and where I have committed my life to the Church is in trouble. I was miraculously spared when the 2010 earthquake brought the walls of my office building crashing down around me. The destruction from that event was so terrible and so many lives were lost or shattered in moments. Today feels like a slow-motion earthquake in Haiti. Each day, more people are shaken and broken by these circumstances. Each day, another brick crumbles in the wall between order and chaos.

However, I do not come to you in despair. I come to you in hope and thanksgiving. So far, the Diocese of Hinche has not been directly impacted by the violence. We suffer from inflation and shortages, and we cannot travel safely, but the gangs are not here. We continue to nurture the souls of the faithful. We continue to educate children. We continue to feed the hungry. We continue to clothe the poor. We continue to provide medical care to the sick. Every day, I call on the clergy, religious and laity in our diocese to have faith. We must have faith that God wants a better future for our people. And we must do everything in our power so His will is done. This is my hope. You have been at our side for many years. It is with your generous help that we are able to serve our people. Knowing that we are in your prayers uplifts our hearts. We miss your joyful faces, and we long for the day when you can visit us. Until then, we are so grateful that you have not forgotten us. This is my thanksgiving.

Let me share some of the progress we have made. I know Americans like statistics so I will share some numbers. In 2022, we had 3,700 Baptisms, 3,817 First Communions, and 1,047 Confirmations. Our 149 Elementary and Middle Schools and 21 Secondary Schools with 1,344 Teachers educated 34,956 Children and served over 5,000,000 meals. We built 2 new Churches: Saint Joseph in Thomonde and Saint Ann in Trianon and 2 new Schools: in Colladère and in Darlegrand. Among our Diocesan


Projects, we have maintained the bakery, despite the difficulty of getting supplies. We are nearing the completion of the new Cemetery. And, we have launched the Honey Production project.

We did all of this despite the situation in our country. These accomplishments required dedicated clergy, religious and laity working tirelessly. However, they also required resources. Many of these miraculous accomplishments could not have happened without your help. Even though you were not physically present, you were at our side during these difficult times. As I said, you have not forgotten us, and this is my thanksgiving.

You know that my vision is for a day when we no longer have our begging hand out to you. I believe even now we are moving toward a partnership and pray that I live to see the day when we are self-sufficient and can help others. Until then, we will continue to count on your loving care for your brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Hinche. As I thank you for your generosity and ask you to continue to help us, I also recognize that we need to be better partners through our communication with you. It can be frustrating for you to not hear updates or receive reports about your twinning parishes. You also long to see more photos to help you stay connected with the community you serve. We will do better. My friend Drew Peloubet will work with a few of your leaders, and members of my team, to develop a shared commitment – a sort of contract between the twinning parishes. Each has a reasonable expectation from the other that should be upheld. He will also work with any of you who want to start a Facebook page and join in a Haiti community. This will allow you and your twinning parish share photos and updates, and to see what other twins are doing. I will encourage pastors to post pictures and updates frequently. Our goal is to increase the flow of information and visibility, so you feel more connected. If you are interested in participating, come forward after our session to receive Drew's contact information.

Again, these times are difficult, but I come to you with hope and thanksgiving. We will not give up. We will continue to serve the Lord by serving His people. He calls us to use our time, talent, and treasure to fulfill His will. Thank you for your loving partnership. May God bless you, and may His will be done.

Sincerely In Christ,



✠ Desinord Jean
Bishop of Hinche, Haiti

Cc: His Excellency Barry Knestout Bishop of Richmond, VA