

Sacred Heart Pilgrimage to Saint Gabriel, twice a year

Reviewed 8/19/21

Because of Covid-19, pilgrimages are not available until further notice.

The Haiti Twinning Ministry (HTM) leads pilgrimages to our twin parish Saint Gabriel (SG) twice a year for growth in spiritual life and developing partnership through relationship. All parishioners are invited. Members going on the pilgrimage go through various steps in their preparation. First they gather for a pre-retreat to discuss how to get physically and spiritually ready for the pilgrimage. Second the Pastor at Sacred Heart (SH) gives them and the ministry a blessing before the journey; the Pastor at Saint Gabriel also gives them a blessing before returning home. This to help the pilgrims to stay on the path that leads to God and for His protection. Also, members of the HTM and parishioners at Sacred Heart keep a vigil while the pilgrims are away. They stay awake in their prayers for the conversion of pilgrims and for their safety.

Because of Covid-19 the last pilgrimage to SG was in March 2020. Four parishioners participated. Typically, The Pastor at SG collects the pilgrims from the airport in the Dominican Republic and drives them to the SG Rectory in Lascahobas. This gives all passengers a chance to catch up on family and parish news.

The pilgrims are housed in newly renovated bedrooms on the second floor. The ladies share one room and the men another. Electricity is not reliable and running water or buckets of water are cold.

The day starts with the rectory keeper, ringing the church bells at 5:00 am. The Pastor at SG celebrates **Mass** at 6:00 am during the weekdays and 8:00 am on Sundays. The pilgrims typically go over the readings before Mass, to better follow Mass celebrated partly in Haitian Creole, and partly in French. The Pilgrims are invited to participate in the Mass the way they do at SH. The Pastor at SG has breakfast with the pilgrims. Often, this meal consists of hot coffee, fresh fruit, an omelet, and some fresh bread with cheese. The food is delicious.

The rest of the morning is free. We often go to the **daily market** and to SG School before it gets hot. All **visits to the school** are scheduled in advance and visitors are toured by Mr. Fritz André, the Head of School or the Abbé. It is a joy to enter each classroom. The students welcome the pilgrims with songs, and poems.

The Pilgrims share some **chores** to focus their stay on Jesus: laundry, sweeping the bedroom floors, carrying water for the bathrooms, and collecting potable water for brushing teeth.

Lunch is served between 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Guests, traveling priests, and nuns often join us at the table. Most of the conversation is in Haitian Creole. Pilgrims make an effort to **learn some Creole** in order to communicate with their hosts and friends. In the early afternoon, pilgrims gather for communal and individual reflections and prayers and to discuss an article related to Catholic social teaching from the Pilgrim Manual.

When time is available during the summer which is the rainy season, The Pastor at SG takes the pilgrims for a field trip to **the school vegetable farm**. Mr. George, the local farmer picks manioc, string beans, eggplants, bananas and others for the kitchen at the rectory and at the school. Sometime, the Pastor also takes us to a couple of the parish chapels in the pretty countryside. There is ample time to meet with **old and new friends**. Parishioners invite pilgrims to their home for a family gathering on their front porch. The little children delight us with their daughters. Bondye bon!