



## Going to Saint Gabriel, Lascahobas, Haiti, a Trip or a Pilgrimage?

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When the pilgrims return from Haiti, their families and friends asked them “How was your trip?” Did they mean the trip with its unpredictable turns, delays and noise or the pilgrimage, a magnificent journey to a land of spirit? Going to St. Gabriel is much more than a trip, it is a pilgrimage. It is a voyage to a holy land, to render homage to our brothers and sisters, one in Christ; it is a reflection on our faith.

Preparing for a pilgrimage is different than preparing for a trip. It has components such as a vigil, blessings, prayers, and reflection, and being in spirit.

**Vigil--**The Haiti Twinning Ministry members kept a vigil during the duration of the pilgrimage. Each day they kept the pilgrims in their mind with prayers for safety and transformation.

**Blessings--**The Pastors at both Sacred Heart and Saint Gabriel blessed the pilgrims before their departures from Sacred Heart and from St. Gabriel. The pilgrims joined Jesus Christ on His journey.

**Prayer and Reflection--**The pilgrims started each day by attending morning Mass and by sharing the Eucharist with the parishioners at St. Gabriel. They ended each day by reading passages from the holy bible and reflected on where they saw Jesus among the people they came in contact with.

**Being in Spirit--**Being in spirit with our brothers and sisters is to deeply listen to them and learn from them with a childlike mind. It is to accept that they have a lot to share with us, and not only us with them. It is an opportunity to learn how people from a different culture than ours enjoy their daily lives, and how they solve their challenges. We learned that much joy comes in actions done in community: preparing meals, washing dishes, doing laundry, getting water from the cistern etc. Hospitality is rendered with the presence of the whole family that stops their activities to visit with the pilgrims at the front of their homes. A gentle touch, a smile, a kind word are gifts of mutual nurturing of the body and soul.

So now the question rises again. “How was your trip?” Are we ready as people of faith to hear about the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage or are we ready to only hear the noise of the trip with its anxieties? When faced with the challenges of traveling we have two choices; we can turn the challenges into problems or turn the same challenges into opportunities to let God do His will, and for us to get out of His way.

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<http://sacredheartnorfolk.org/Haiti.htm>

<http://www.fonkoze.org/aboutfonkoze/whoweare.html>



Parish Community Center



March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 Ground Breaking Day for Saint Gabriel Middle School