



Thursday, September 29th was a great day for the people of St. Michel' s in Roche-a-Bateau. It was their parish feast day. It was the Feast of the Archangels - Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. As is their custom each year, the parish church was filled with people who had come to celebrate Mass with their pastor, Fr. Serge. They continued the celebration in the parish hall next door with a meal served to several hundred people. It was a day of great joy for the people with music and dancing at the Mass and the reception.



St. Michel's parish feast day celebration on September 29th

Just five days later while the people of Roche-a-Bateau hunkered down and sought shelter from the winds and rain of Hurricane Matthew, they did not know what was happening to the parish buildings where they had celebrated just a few days before. The parish hall was completely destroyed and is now nothing more than a pile of rubble. The roof of the church collapsed into the interior with wood and beams burying the pews and covering the newly tiled floors. Imagine the horror and heartbreak after the winds died down as they discovered the devastating scene in the center of their town. The following day the people of Roche-a-Bateau came to Fr. Serge at the heavily damaged rectory hoping that he was able to communicate with the outside world via phone or email. However, communication had been cut off, the roads were blocked with fallen trees and debris, and they could do nothing but wait for help to come. Help came a few days later when a Catholic Relief Service (CRS) truck

came to the rectory and aid workers began to distribute water and food to the people of the town.



Aerial photo showing the damage to St. Michel's & the Catholic Relief Services truck @ St. Michel's Rectory

The people of southern Haiti have basically lost everything. Most of the houses are gone. Schools where the children go to learn and eat have also been seriously damaged or destroyed. Farmers have lost their crops just as they were planting for the rainy season. The Haitian government has reported that 1.4 million people will need ongoing assistance, while CRS and other relief agencies continue to deliver food, clean water and temporary shelters. Medical missions have also been set up to respond to the outbreak of cholera and other health needs. It will take months if not years for Roche-a-Bateau to recover from the worst hurricane to strike in over 50 years. While the global news media has moved on to other crises in the world, we remain aware of and concerned for the people of St. Michel's. The people of St. Mary's have responded already with great generosity. The money donated to Haiti will be sent directly to the parish for their rebuilding efforts. May our prayers and support for our brothers and sisters at St. Michel's continue throughout the coming seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Let us pray for them as they always pray for us.



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