

Dan is on the trip with his son Daniel. Dan and I are roommates with two other men, Keit and Namir. Dan is a great guy and we have pretty much done all of our mission trip together. He and I have been helping Joseph, who runs a kindergarten through high school for Haitian kids. The city built a new road in front of his school and tore down the wall he had between the street and the school. Haitian law requires him to have a wall up before he can open his school. The wall is made out of cement blocks, the big ones like we have out at home that they use with the three holes in them. Let me start from our first day though.

Our first full day, Friday, we went to the Missionaries of Charity Orphanage. We had mass in the sisters chapel and it has a relic of Blessed Mother Teresa (a drop of her blood). I said a prayer for hHOM there, that we will discover what further role we can play in Haiti. There is certainly much to do, in fact more to do here than anyone can imagine. It is endless. At the orphanage, we held babies and kids and played with them. I spent the whole 4 hours we were there holding Laurent. At first he would not come to me, or to anyone at all. So of course that was a challenge for me, and I decided just to pick him up. Laurent would not look at me and in fact his eyes seemed to just roll and not really be able to focus or look at me. So I just kept holding him. He is 3 years old, per his tag and is malnourished. He looks more like the size of a 9 month old child. He is so tiny. I tried to feed him breakfast and he refused to eat anything. So I kept holding him. I then brought him into the chapel for the kids and the older ones were singing beautiful, holy Haitian songs. Laurent finally did open his eyes when he heard them and seemed interested. After that I was able to take him to the swing. He was scared of it, so I finally took him out and sat in a swing with him a swung. He liked that, as long as my feet did not leave the ground. I then tried to see how he could walk. He was definitely weak, but he did walk, as long as I held his hand. He still would not look at me though. He seemed not to focus much. But I then took him and fed him lunch and he gobbled it up. He then drank milk and I gave him more food. So that was really good to see. I changed his diaper (cloth diapers) twice and pooped on me twice. Oh well, I never was good at cloth diapers. They are the ones with Velcro and they are definitely worn and not sticking well. By the time I had to leave, he was crying a lot. He did not want me to put him down and would cry every time. I finally did have to leave him crying. I have not been able to go back yet, as I have been just working on the wall for the school

Third day, Saturday. We put up more bricks, about 50. It was terribly hot, we were carrying buckets of cement for the blocks and were feeling pretty good, as it was really moving along. But wait, a road inspector was walking by and started saying something to me about the wall, pointing, shaking his head and pointing to the neighbors wall. I knew it was not good and went and got Christopher. I knew it. The wall was not to code and we had to take down almost all of the bricks we had just spent a day and a half putting up. We had to use a crow bar to pry them off, break the cement, move the blocks, etc. It was a hot day too and we sweated up a storm. We certainly are getting great exercise. Needless to say, that was not the low point of the day. It was not so bad, when I think of all the sad stories I am hearing here. One boy from the neighborhood and I really hit it off. His name is Tegier. His mother and father both died in the earthquake and he lives with his aunt along with his brothers and sisters. Much of the poverty is related to this as families have to move in together, as so many of their family members died in the quake. Even though it was 3 years ago, it has taken a tremendous toll on the people and on families. Tegier is only 11 and he is off on his own the whole day. I cannot fathom rian, at 10, or Kevin at 12 just wandering in the neighborhoods of Haiti on their own. It is certainly dangerous and there is much theft and hurtful things going on here. Well, I offered to pay him \$1 if he would help up with the wall. He did and he worked hard and always smiled. We then took him to the hotel and he had dinner with all of us and the boys all took him swimming and played with him. He was in his glory, I know. He was having the time of his life. Then the moment came. I had to tell him he would have to go home now. I had to watch him walk through the door, by himself, and go home. I wanted to walk him home, but I was not allowed to go in the neighborhood on my own. They said he would be ok and so I had to let him go. It breaks my heart to think of how many of these children are wandering the streets here without anywhere to really go during the day. Their homes are certainly what I imagined them to be. They look somewhat like some of the awful houses we have seen in Russia, but definitely worse. Haiti is the 9th poorest countries in the world and the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, 9 of the 10 poorest countries are all in Africa, so Haiti is our poorest country.

Day Four, Sunday. Dan and I, and Pat and Nick all went to work on the wall. We spent some of our money paying the Haitian workers that are helping to build the wall. They make \$25 per day, for the two professionals and the other three were paid \$10.00 for their 3 days of work. So \$25 is a really good pay for these men, as is \$10. We paid them today, as they said they needed it so they could buy food for their families. We also bought 10 bags of cement, 100 new blocks, as many of the ones we have to take down were not reusable, we both wire, rakes, brooms, and rocks for the wall cement. Tomorrow, we will buy chalk board paint to make new chalk boards for the school. We are also going to buy lots of garbage bags as there is so much garbage, everywhere. They just throw it on the ground. The school grounds has lots of broken glass, bottles, rusty tin cans and garbage, garbage, garbage. Nick and Pat spent a lot of the day, picking up trash, to try to clean up the school ground. We are paying some of the local kids to help by having them pick up garbage and showing them that glass can cut their feet if on the ground. The kids pay is \$1, plus a 7-up, some smarties and some toys. We figure we might help them know that they should not throw the garbage on the ground. Pat and Nick and the other boys with them, did a fantastic job. They were taking much of the broken cement we had to take down and they are filling up a large area with it. We are then going to cement over that, to make a walkway. Also, Joseph wants to cement that area, because a lot of people throw trash there and he can just sweep it up, instead of having to let it lay there. Also, you cannot believe the school. It is a one room wood structure with wooden windows and a tin roof. They have long benches to sit in that the last mission trip made for them. They also have another room in the apartment building, next to the school, for the older kids. They don't want the younger kids in the apartment, as if there is an earthquake, the little kids tend to have a hard time getting out and the ceiling is cement and crushes them. So that is why they are in the simple, one room school house. No one in the US would ever think of having their kids attend this school, as it is certainly a very poor one. They have so many needs at this school. They need desks for the kids, instead of benches. They need desks for the teachers. The teachers sit in the little grade school desk that we have in the US. They are the only ones with this kind of desk. They need a better building too. The door is a simple door with no lock and one of the doors has a big crack in it. In fact, we helped rehang the one door and when it was done, all of the people clapped and were so happy to have that door. Wow!! So there are lots of needs there.

I would also like to talk about our Sunday Mass. We were going to go back to the hotel and have it there, but I asked Father if we might have one right there, at the School. I said I was not sure it was allowed, but Father said that he would love to do it there. So we decided to figure out where to have it. We were going to have it in the school, but it was really hot in there. There are no lights and no electricity in it, so no fans. So we decided to have it on the porch of the apartment building, right outside the class room for the older kids. So we started to get ready for it and Father went back to the hotel to get his things for mass. He came back and we were working on the wall. So Father asked who would come and we asked the head guy, Christopher, to come. He said, Tom, you my friend now, but why I come. What will we do there. We kept saying Mass and he said, Why I come, what we do? Finally one of the Haitians understood and used a Creole word and Christopher's eyes lit up and he said, oh, now I understand and he said yes. I then went out and asked lots of the others there to come and they all said they would come. IT took a while to round them up. I then asked a woman to come and she smiled and said yes, very excitedly. She said I get ready. She then had to take a shower and dress in her best. Of course, all the others were already at mass and waiting. Father Aaron was also suffering from Montezuma's revenge not feeling well. So he was patiently waiting for me, not knowing where I was. I knew they were all waiting, but I really wanted this lady to come. Father finally sent Pat to find me and I told Pat that a lady had to get ready for Mass. So Pat went back and said I was waiting for a lady to dress for Mass and all the men knew what this meant, a long wait. And it was. But she finally hurried up after Joseph finally came and asked her to hurry. She did and there were about 12 Haitians there for mass. Father Aaron had Joseph interpret for him, especially the readings. IT was a very long reading and later tonight Father Aaron related how sick he was feeling and how difficult it was. SO the reading was a very long one about Abrahams discourse about 50, 40, 30, 25, 20, 10 faithful people to save Sodom. Fathers' sermon was beautiful and he related Abrahams story to the quake and how God pared Haiti because of the faithful people here, especially those at our Mass. He cried twice and said one of his dreams for this trip was to say a Mass for the Haitians. I felt I helped with that and Father said the Holy Spirit used me to call the Haitians to Mass. Watching Fathers complete joy while he said mass was the highlight of my day. He

just smiled some much and his tears of joy, as he called them, was really beautiful. It was a really cool Mass and I was so happy to have been at it.