



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

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Students from Trinidad & Tobago, on North Hall's Summer 2010 Haiti Outreach Program, spent a week on reconstruction work in Haiti's capital, Port au Prince, devastated after January's earthquake.

Port au Prince, and especially the downtown area and the surroundings, was devastated by the earthquake that struck on January 12 this year.

Huge amounts of money have been donated from around the world to help, but the process of rubble-clearing and rebuilding is desperately slow. The actual physical help of skilled and semi-skilled manual labor is often what is needed most.

In response to the terrible conditions in which many Haitians still find themselves seven months on, North Hall, a university centre in St Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago, coordinated a group of students to travel to Haiti for a social outreach program. They spent the first week of August in Port au Prince, hosted by the Sisters of Cluny. The work included taking measurements and readings for the rebuilding of a primary school and an orphanage, running an art workshop for children and painting buildings under repair.

This effort was inspired by some words of St Josemaria Escriva, the Founder of Opus Dei: "A university must educate its students to have a sense of service to society, promoting the common good with their professional work and their activity. University people should be responsible citizens with a healthy concern for the problems of other people and a generous spirit which brings them to face these problems and resolve them in the best possible way" (*Conversations*, 74).

"Frequently students' concern for social problems is limited to written and oral demonstrations, and at times it degenerates into useless or harmful outbursts. I myself measure the sincerity of concern for others in terms of works of service, and I know of thousands of cases of students in many countries who have refused

to build their own little private worlds” (*Conversations*, 75).

The students found the experience a mixture of devastation and inspiration. As they said, “The scale of the damage is so great that it seems almost impossible to tackle, yet the people are optimistic and hardworking. It was truly a lesson in how to approach the difficulties of life. Now we need to see how to keep Haiti in the forefront and do our part in the process of rebuilding.”

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