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Serious Earthquake Strikes Haiti Many Feared Dead or Injured

Marianist Communities sustain heavy damage, but it seems all are safe

By now you have undoubtedly heard that a strong earthquake rocked the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas yesterday evening. There is extensive damage, many injuries, and authorities are warning that there is "serious loss of life" expected.

Many have enquired as to the status of the members of the Society of Mary who are serving in Haiti, as well as those in formation and the lay people with whom they work. While it is very difficult to communicate, since most means of communication are inoperative, we did make contact earlier today with Bro. Hervé Guillo Du Bodan, SM, Master of Novices. We spoke to him from Rome by telephone at dawn, Haiti time. They still do not have complete information but here is what is known so far:



1. The earthquake occurred about 5:00 in the afternoon on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.
2. There were no deaths or serious injuries among our brothers, novices or pre-novices. They were fortunate to escape, in some cases jumping off a balcony to get out of the building. They consider their safe evacuation nothing short of miraculous.
3. The novitiate building is totally crushed and the recently acquired prenovitiate has become inaccessible, but the "large building" remains standing.
4. Fr. Gustave Lamontagne, SM, who was visiting from Canada was away from the city at the time of the earthquake. There has been no word from him. While there still will be concern until we make contact with him, the area of the country where he is does not seem to have been seriously damaged. This is considered a second "miracle" since the room he was occupying in Port-au-Prince is currently between two concrete slabs.
5. All of the people are living in the streets since the buildings are not considered safe to enter.
6. We have made contact with some members of the local MLC and so far all are thought to have survived.
7. The center of the city of Port-au-Prince is, in great measure, destroyed. The Presidential Palace and the Cathedral were among those structures most damaged. Most schools have collapsed and, as one might imagine, transportation, communication and other vital services are in tatters.

We share this information with you because many have expressed concern and worry about the Marianists and the people of Haiti in General. We encourage your support and assistance in any way possible and, above all, ask for your prayers for the people who are so devastated by this latest tragedy.