

Fr Roderick Homily

Fr Ongen and Members of the Haiti Committee

Brothers and Sisters in Christ

My name is Roderick Mitial, from the Diocese of Hinche in Haiti. I am the Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Belladere since 2019. Very long time ago, Saint Mary's of the Presentation parish has been twinned with Our Lady of Lourdes in Belladere. We are very very blessed to have you as a sister parish. Thanks to God.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is with a heart full of joy and gratitude that I stand before you in the wonderful Church on the Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Ordinary. For the past six years, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Belladere has been blessed through the generous support and fraternal love of this parish, Saint Mary's.

Your solidarity has been a true reflection of the Gospel-supporting our school children, strengthening our parish, and extending a hand to immigrants from the Dominican Republic and those suffering in our own land. You have not only shared material support, but also hope, dignity, and faith. For this, I say on behalf of all my people: Thank You.

As you know, my country is going through one of the most difficult moments of its history. The political situation is unstable, leadership is weak, institutions are fragile, and many feel abandoned by those who should guide and protect them.

The economic situation is even more alarming; inflation has made the price of basic needs unbearable. Parents often cannot provide food for their children, education or healthcare. There is no employment available for young people who then lose all hope.

The social situation is deeply wounded. Violence and insecurity dominate daily life. Families are displaced, communities live in fear, and many people risk their lives trying to leave the country in search of safety and dignity. The poorest are the first victims, especially children and the elderly.

This is the reality that my parishioners face every day. And yet, during this crisis, faith remains alive. People gather to pray, to sing, and to support one another. They believe that Christ crucified is also Christ risen.

Brothers and Sisters at Saint Mary's your parish has been a light Shinning in the darkness. Thank You.

Thanks to you, because our children have access to school and nourishment.

Thanks to you, because families in Belladere have felt the Church walking with them.

Thanks to you, because immigrants and displaced people in my country have found help and human dignity.

What you may see as small sacrifices here are truly miracles for us. Every gift, every prayer, every gesture of solidarity has touched lives in ways you may never fully see on this side of heaven.

As we begin this new school year, the situation of education in my country remains very difficult. Many families cannot afford tuition, uniforms, or books. Teachers often face months without pay in most schools across the country, and many leave their jobs or even emigrate because of the economic crisis.

But thanks to you, our brothers and sisters here at Saint Mary's, the reality in our parish is different. You make it possible for our teachers to receive their salaries. Because of your generosity, our teachers can continue their mission with dignity and stability. They can remain in the classroom, to prepare lessons, to guide the children, not worrying every day about how to feed their own families.

This is not only an act of generosity, but also an act of justice. It gives hope to our children, who can count on having their teachers present every day. It strengthens our whole community, because education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and despair.

So when you support teachers' salaries, you are not just paying a wage—you are investing in the future of an entire generation. On behalf of our teachers, our students, and their families, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Today's Gospel tells us about the call of Matthew, a tax collector, someone despised and excluded by society. Yet Jesus looked at him with mercy and said: "*Follow me*". And Matthew got up and followed him.

The Pharisees criticized Jesus: "*Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?*" But Jesus responded: "*It is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick...I desire mercy. Not sacrifice.*"

This Gospel is alive in our mission together. Jesus came close to those who were forgotten, rejected, or suffering. And you, dear friends, have done the same for us. By supporting teachers, feeding children, helping migrants, and sustaining the Church in a poor country, you have chosen mercy over indifference. You have said, with your lives. "*Yes, Lord, we will follow you.*"

I want you to know that our brothers and sisters in Belladere pray for you daily. We carry you in our Eucharist, in our rosaries, in our hearts.

The challenges are immense, I invite you: do not grow tired of mercy, together we can continue to be signs of God's Kingdom. Do not think your contribution is too small. For us, it is the difference between despair and hope, between ignorance and education, between fear and faith.

Like St. Paul, I can only say: "*I give thanks to my God each time I remember you*" (*Philippians 1:3*). You are more than a twin parish: you are our family. You have shown us the face of Christ, the Christ who calls Matthew, who eats with the poor, who desire mercy.

May God Bless you abundantly, may he strengthen this bond of communion between our two parishes, and may he continue to make us instruments of His mercy in the world.