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FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
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TOGETHER WE CAN HELP OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN HAITI

I write to you now regarding the Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church in Haiti, established more than fifteen years ago. Throughout the course of its existence, the Mission has experienced constant privation and tribulations, most recently sustaining considerable damage during last January's major earthquake. Despite its sufferings, the Orthodox community in Haiti has grown to seven parishes under the pastoral leadership of its two Haitian priests, Fr Jean Chenier-Dumais and Fr Gregoire Legoute.

The dire conditions under which many of our Orthodox brethren are living in Haiti are unimaginable, according the first hand accounts of clergy who recently visited four of the parishes. To help those whose circumstances are most grave, the Fund for Assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, in cooperation with the Mission, has established a program whereby parishes and individuals can now provide direct assistance to these families. I appeal to you to open your hearts to our suffering brethren and sisters, being ever mindful of Christ's words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me".

Of the seven parishes in Haiti, only two have permanent church buildings. Both of these churches were damaged in the earthquake, yet, with God's help, have since been stabilized. The remaining parishes, however, are currently holding services either in rented buildings or, in several cases, in open air tents. While it is imperative to provide for the needs of the poor, we must also keep sight of the need for durable church buildings in these five parishes. The Mission recently purchased a parcel of land for one of these parishes, St Augustine's in Jacmel, and it was blessed by Bishop Michael of Geneva & Western Europe during his recent visit. It is now time to begin the process of preparing to build a permanent church for this thriving community. I have blessed the Mission to establish a Building Fund for the parish of St Augustine and encourage you to lend your heartfelt support to this God-pleasing endeavor.

Please take a moment to familiarize yourselves with the Mission's holy labors by visiting its website at www.orthodoxhaiti.org and the Haiti Orthodox Family Relief program's website at www.haitiorthodoxfamilyrelief.com, to learn more about how you can help.

May God bless you abundantly for your prayers and support.

+ Hilarion

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