

Dear fellow parishioners:

As was widely reported in the news, recently six religious sisters from the Congregation of St. Anne, along with others, were kidnapped from a bus on a main road in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Fortunately, all of them have been released unharmed. Nevertheless, while the kidnappings and violence by gangs in Haiti since the 2021 assassination of then President Jovenel Moïse have led to a security crisis in the country, especially in and around the capital of Port-au-Prince, the abduction of the sisters in broad daylight from their bus on a main road in the capital signaled a further deepening of the crisis, together with escalating violence between rival gangs, before February 7 when interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry is due to step down following an agreement he signed last year. Though relieved and grateful for the release of the sisters and those kidnapped with them, let us continue to pray for an end to the violence, and restoration of just order and peace for the people of Haiti, especially those suffering the most. As Pope Francis as recently expressed last Sunday: “In asking fervently for their release, I pray for social harmony in the country, and I ask all to put stop to the violence, which causes so much suffering to that dear population.”

Yet, what is not so publicly known is that the morning the sisters were abducted, Fr. Jean Jacques Saint Louis, smm, the Montfort Provincial in Haiti, had celebrated Mass for them, but then returned to his house by back roads, rather than the main road which the sisters took, otherwise he may have been kidnapped too. You may recall that he was with us last July for the Missionary Appeal on behalf of the Montfortian school in Port-au-Prince, Institution Mixte Notre Dame de l’Assomption, and specifically for a new building for over 300 students. As he said of the school when it was first built in 2021, eleven years after the devastating earthquake in 2010:

The Montfortian mission of the Company of Mary since its arrival in the country in 1871, has prioritized the support of the underprivileged. Our educational institutions are accessible to the entire population and promote teaching based on moral and civic values that can contribute to a disciplined and community-minded generation.

Attached are some photos of the progress that has been made on the school building with the support of our prayers and donations, which help to provide jobs for the workers and hope for the school children and their families, in the midst of the lawlessness, chaos, and violence now plaguing the country. This is to let you know of the progress that has been made, along with the gratitude of Fr. Saint Louis, smm, and the school community. Let us continue to keep them, and all of the Haitian people, in our prayers.

In gratitude,
Fr Steve