



The Order of Malta Helps Quake-Stricken Haiti

ON JANUARY 11, 2010, HÔPITAL SACRÉ COEUR in Milot, Haiti had 73 beds.

Two weeks later, as mounting waves of the sick and injured desperately sought help after the Caribbean country's catastrophic January 12th earthquake, the rural medical center's bed count had surged to more than 400. Many of the most seriously injured arrived by helicopter from the stricken capital, Port-au-Prince.

Sacré Coeur responded mightily when the earth shook, its work supported by the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta – the Order of Malta.

Within six weeks, the Haitian-staffed Sacré Coeur, designed to serve a regional population of 250,000, had performed 800 surgeries on the injured. It was caring for more than 500 critically ill people and their families, plus thousands of others affected by the earthquake, which killed 230,000 people and injured another 300,000 throughout the country.

The battle was fought, but hardly won. Months later, as the island nation struggled to rebuild and restore sanitary conditions for the more than one million of its people left homeless by the disaster, cholera struck. Sacré Coeur, undamaged by the earthquake, set up a special treatment center and started to get the disease under control.

Then came the hurricane and the cholera outbreak became an epidemic. The Cap-Haïtien region where Milot is located was then the hardest hit area in Haiti. Since November, the hospital has treated almost 1,100 cholera patients, one-third of them children.

Sacré Coeur is overseen by the CRUDEM Foundation, the Center for the Rural Development of Milot, a 501(c)(3) charity. It was founded by two Knights of the Order of Malta from St. Louis, Missouri, Theodore Dubuque, M.D., and the late Carlos Reese. Directed by Dr. Peter Kelly of Massachusetts, also a Knight, its mission is to be a Catholic hospital and medical center consistent with the ideals of the Order, providing quality health care to the sick and the poor in Milot and an educational center for all who serve health care in Haiti.

From its inception, CRUDEM/ Hôpital Sacré Coeur has enjoyed the hands-on involvement of well over 100 Knights and Dames as an official work of the Order of Malta. The American Association of the Order provided \$470,000 for CRUDEM's earthquake efforts in 2010, plus \$95,000 for ongoing operations.

Within days of the disaster, another arm of the Order was mobilized and on the ground in Haiti. Malteser International, the Order of Malta's worldwide humanitarian relief service, was providing medical treatment for the injured



The Haitian Health Foundation (HHF) is another four-star charity with an ongoing mission in Haiti that launched into immediate action when the earth shook that terrible day. Founded by Dr. Jerry Lowney of Connecticut, a Knight of the Order of Malta, the HHF is an organization of lay

and religious that at the suggestion of Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity was established years ago in the underserved Jérémie region, which was inundated after the earthquake with 120,000 refugees from Port-au-Prince.

They arrived traumatized, seeking shelter, food, and in many cases, medical care. Most came with little more than the clothes on their backs. HHF health workers met them on the boat docks and helped provide water, food, and medical care – especially for the women and sick children.

HHF's medical facilities became very busy places, both for women in high-risk pregnancies and for children suffering from severe malnutrition. Although Jérémie is 100 miles from the epicenter of the earthquake, more than 500 rural houses – rickety shacks of banana leaf, rusted tin, and mud floors were damaged or destroyed by the tremors. HHF is repairing and rebuilding these houses. The American Association of the Order contributed \$175,000 to assist its efforts.

Even though Haiti is no longer in the headlines, the Order of Malta remains hard at its work, which began long before the earthquake and will be ongoing as long as there is a need. The Order continues to send money, medical personnel, and materials to Haiti, and is enlarging Sacré Coeur to provide much-needed care to the local population – and against the day that it is again called upon to lead heroic efforts in a humanitarian crisis.

The Order of Malta has concentrated much of its humanitarian and medical aid on children, orphans, and mothers who had survived the Haiti earthquake, inspiring one young mother, after giving birth in the Darbonne health center not long afterward, to name her baby Jim Malte. Little Jim Malte was one sign of hope to gladden the hearts of the Order of Malta's international team, consisting of doctors, nurses, logistics experts, and local volunteers, who worked so tirelessly for the people of Haiti. ●