

## Haiti: Who are these people?



*Denise Snyder Lay  
SDS, administering  
to the sick in Haiti.*

Eighteen years ago, a church collection for the people of Haiti drew the interest of Bob and Denise Synder, SDS Lay parishioners at St. Gregory in Nashville, TN. When they asked Fr. Jim Bretl, Salvatorian pastor at the time, about these people, he told them to go find out. So they did. They learned that the needs of this poverty stricken area in the northern part of Haiti were overwhelming and they were determined to do something.

### **New Developments**

Despite challenges they face as a community, the Haitian people continue to be welcoming and what little they have. Just within the last six years the Haiti Project purchased land and developed the Fr. Jim Bretl Agriculture Center, named in honor of Fr. Jim Bretl. The property was enclosed with a chain link fence and concrete walls, a pavilion and storeroom were built to

hold formation workshops and process vanilla; a caretaker house was constructed, as well as an outdoor kitchen, an office and a separate composting toilet.



*Bob Snyder Lay SDS, and Lavalas,  
looking over the double dug  
gardens at the Ag Center.*

In addition, erosion control systems have been put in place and many different trees have been planted as well as a variety of yams, which are a staple in the Haitian diet. They have been blessed to be able to hire two full time employees and the aid of an agronomist to help with soil management and crop production, including irrigation and the use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. And, after receiving a truck from a Lay Salvatorian benefactor, they have been able to move necessary supplies around the mission and collaborate with others working in Haiti... They have become the local ambulance!

### **Project Haiti continues to:**

- Support five schools which now buy much of their food from locally grown sources rather than rice and beans from America
- Hold annual workshops for farmers and women in the area
- Support the 500 farmers who organized an association to work through problems and introduce new farming methods
- With permission from the Bishop, distribute communion on Sundays when there is not a priest present at one of the two chapels.

“Education remains very important,” said Bob. “Most of the adults we work with have very little education. This affects many aspects of change.”

“The goal of Project Haiti is giving these families a way to feed themselves and gather the respect that comes with being self-sufficient,” said Denise.

## **Support our Salvatorian Ministries**



*Lavalas, guardian at the Fr. Jim Bretl SDS Center,  
looking over the vanilla with Delise who is the Center manager.*