

Dear brothers and friends,

This is a follow-up on my previous newsletter, which raised a number of reactions. Some were on target, others somewhat missed the point that I was making. Nevertheless, every letter showed how much those brothers and sisters care, and they all promised to get deeper involved in prayers and otherwise. In that sense, the Lord is having his way.

Our delegation of 17 came home safely. We have witnessed crowds bewildered and going in all directions. The few UN workers are lost among those running to them for help, with complaints or with questions. Those poor foreigners are more lost in the chaos than those relying on them. The people holding the reins are not near. They sit at the UN headquarters and in other places where the movers and shakers set short term, midterm and long term goals.

Thinking of the international Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), more than once I have challenged them as Eben-Ezer is part of their platform, to tell me where they think they are going when every organization does what it wants and not caring about what the other does. They always answer me that their orders come from their base at the international level, and they cannot deviate from their mandate after they are on site, even if they know better now.

The situation of the Church doesn't seem to be any different to me right now. The local leadership has gone down, the decisions are being made at the ministries' headquarters. I as a leader, have been looking for my Haitian colleagues in the capital, and they're nowhere to be found. I wasn't discouraged, and I still am not, but I am wondering what is the future for those resilient Christians singing in the hospitals in Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. I was moved by those hosted by a Baptist Church in the DR, where we stayed Monday night. They were singing at 4:00 am in Creole: "If Christ wasn't with me, where would I be?" and the chorus goes "He has surprises for you also, my friend!" What is the future for the Haitian Church if we are unable to minister to those victims of the streets wandering around like sheep without a shepherd? If we let them down now, will we have the nerves to approach them after others have looked after them?

The 21st century Church has a set of problems that weaken our power. Some of us run our ministries like a business, and others like a club. We compete against each other, and when we hear another Christian is having success in an area, we approach him to steal his secret instead of joining him for the sake of synergy. Many good organizations start on a good foundation, interdenominational, non denominational, interchurch, interracial, crosscultural, but then one drop of selfish interest or motivation drives us into a religion, and we start excluding...

We no longer look for those in need, we like to partner with those who're having success. We extend cold shoulders to those who are victims of gossips. We want to stay clean and do not want the blood of those with bad reputation, meaning those who have been hurt or assassinated by others' evil tongues, to spill over us. In the parable of the good samaritan, the emphasis is put on the good samaritan and not on the hurting fellow he rescued. I have heard that maybe that wounded man was imprudent. The road to Jericho was no road for a man to be traveling alone on. According to some theologians, he was somewhat responsible for what had happened to him, but Jesus overlooked all that. So a good deed counts not because of the beneficiary, but because of the doer.

I know every Christian organization is active trying to do something to help us in Haiti, but the greatest blessing of all would be for all of those in charge of those organizations to somehow, come together around one table, just like all the countries forming the United Nations in the name of their Christ and to discuss Haiti. How wonderful that would be to see the international Church in dialog with the Haitian Church !

I want to finish this long letter by sharing with all of you where we stand right now, some of us in Haiti. We see the rehabilitation of the victims in three phases:

1. The emergency phase is when they are being rescued in the streets and under the crushing buildings and being rushed to the hospital.
2. The recovering phase. That is when the chaplains are needed.
3. The rehabilitation phase. They need a refuge center where they interact with others and where experts come and share with them along the lines of their dormant dreams until they wake up and reintegrate society.

Between leaders in the Dominican Republic who are doing so much for the victims both on the other side and inside of Haiti, and Haitian leaders from different cities in Haiti, we are working on establishing refuge centers which will have a more poetic name than "Refuge centers".

Eben-Ezer is being promised funding to start a refuge center for 10,000 tenants. The process goes as follows:

- to identify the beneficiaries
- to hire buses for the pick-up in Port-au-Prince and/or at the Dominican border
- to provide food, shelter and medical care to them
- to provide job opportunities for them.

We are talking of establishing those centers to be led by Christian leaders and to be empowered by the local churches in every city. Now, can you, my brothers and sisters, imagine what the need will be for us at Eben-Ezer in human resources in order to be efficient and effective in operating our center ?

We will need to provide you over the week-end a list of specific skills needed, but you can already be thinking of your own abilities as a potential volunteer in the meantime. We will see what the funding agency will offer to those volunteering in terms of financial support on the ground.

Yours in the gap,

Michel Morisset