

DECLARATION OF THE JESUITS WORKING IN HAITI

We are Jesuits working in Haiti in a variety of occupations and are witnesses of the daily tragedy experienced by millions of our Haitian brothers and sisters. Like Yahweh in the desert, we see the misery of our people and hear their cries: *“I have seen the miserable state of my people. I have heard their appeal. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I want life for them, not death. But who will free them ? In the past, Moses was my messenger to free my people and lead them out of slavery to Egypt. In his name, he led them to a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus, 3,7-12).*

The misery of our people today is this:

- *Millions of Haitians who are victims of the soaring and never-ending increase in the price of primary products and who cannot meet their most essential needs, even for food.*
- *The drop in national production in all the sectors of the economy which leads to famine and absolute destitution.*
- *The shameful and unsupportable impoverishment of our urban and rural populations.*
- *The increase of insecurity, especially the notable reappearance of kidnapping and the despair of the young.*
- *Our country plunged in shame and despair with its sovereignty trodden under foot and the majority of its population living in subhuman conditions.*

The misery of our people today is also this:

- *The total incapacity of most of our governments to face up to the basic problems of society.*
- *The complete absence of a constructive political opposition, capable of controlling and stimulating government action for the nation's benefit.*
- *The total annihilation of the political role of Parliament to the benefit of dishonest practices such as bribery and corruption etc.*
- *The irresponsibility of the international community, especially of countries called friends of Haiti and of the international financial institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Interamerican Development Bank, etc) who have not kept their promises to Haiti and cynically look on while Haitian society slips into hell.*

The Haitian people, courageous people as they are, this time can take no more. Racked by misery, they cry out. And their cry becomes an appeal.

The people's cry today comes from:

- *Those thousands of young who roam the streets saying they can't take any more and who call for the responsible politicians to assume their responsibility.*

- *Those millions of unemployed, racked by hunger, who vent their anger in the streets of Port-au-Prince and in provincial towns.*
- *Those fathers and mothers who spend several days without being able to eat and now express their misery in street demonstrations.*
- *Those emaciated children from the slums and rural villages who cry each day because they find nothing to eat and have no future.*

Call, cry out, never drop your arms, you courageous people, strength. It is for you to help me to help you. With you I can do much. Without you I will not succeed. You need me, I know. I am your irreplaceable Ally. But I also need you, your cries, your unity, your experience of a suffering people, your courage. Come, let us work together. Victory will be ours if we are struggling for a just cause. You know my name: I AM THE GOD OF LIFE AND NOT DEATH. You know my plan. Jesus of Nazareth expressed it well in the Fourth Gospel: "I come that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10,10).

We are strongly challenged by this repulsive and intolerable situation which threatens to throw our country into new crises; we feel ourselves deeply united to this suffering people and in sincere solidarity to those who are its worst victims. This is why, in the name of our Christian faith and our commitment as Jesuit religious, we strongly exhort:

- ***Those politically responsible:***
 - ***The President of the Republic to take rapidly the necessary political decisions to re-establish confidence and peace; to undertake an in-depth reform of public institutions to finally put the country on the path to development***
 - ***The high authorities of the State (Prime Minister, Ministers, State Secretaries and general Directors, Senators, Deputies etc) in the short term, to draw up and inaugurate, in the shortest possible time, an emergency programme (real and effective) to relieve the sufferings of the people, and in the long term to use the intellectual resources and experience, both national and foreign, to draw up and inaugurate a true plan for national development.***
- ***The political parties and organisations*** to take up their responsibility for criticizing and controlling government action, to help in looking for solutions adapted to the crisis our society is living, and to share effectively in reforming the State so that our country can finally emerge from disgrace and stagnation.
- ***The merchants, industrialists, importers, bankers and other active forces in the country*** to make their contribution to relieve the sufferings of our citizens, and to become aware of the need to work together to help Haiti to its feet.
- ***All those who make up civil society: religious groups, teachers, students, members and heads of associations, trade unions, workers, craftsmen, shop keepers, farmers etc.*** to help us stand up and search together for the solutions of our people's problems.
- ***The international community*** especially those countries called friends of Haiti, the international financial institutions etc. to respect their commitments to Haiti, especially their many promises of cooperation and effective help for the country to emerge from this quagmire.

People of Haiti! Continue to call, to cry out and to summon those you have chosen to serve you. Your strength will be organised and sustained non-violence. Violence is never effective. You call me. Yes, I will be with you and in you through the power of my Spirit.

The Jesuits of Haiti:

Fr. Pérard Monestime, sj
Fr. Derino Sainfariste, sj
Fr. Kawas François, sj
Fr. André Charbonneau, sj
Fr. Miller Lamothe, sj
Fr. Claude Souffrant, sj
Fr. Ramiro Pampols, sj
Fr. Kénel Sénatus, sj
Fr. Gilles Beauchemin, sj
Fr. Gontrand Décoste, sj
Brother Mathurin Charlot, sj
Thomas Dabady, sj
Fr. Godefroy Midi, sj

To send:

- To the media of the Capital and Provinces (radio, newspapers, electronic press)
- To the main agencies of the international press (AFP, Reuters, etc.)
- To NGO's and human rights organisations
- To Church agencies (CEH, CHR, etc.)
- To the Dominican media
- To CPAL (Conference of Latin American Provincials)