Fr Donald Chambers who lived in Haiti noted in a recent article that after five hurricanes in ten years plus this latest earthquake many people are being led to ask: "God, why Haiti?"

According to the article Father Chambers knows how poor the people are and has seen the Catholic Church active in the country amidst limited resources. He said "Why God would let this happen is a mystery, but the faith of the people of Haiti is tremendous. You don't see that in the media." "Their faith makes them resilient. I saw a Twitter message that said the night after the earthquake people were praying and singing. The earthquake had just hit before 5 that afternoon. It was beauty in the midst of tragedy."

Many try to answer the questions we all have about the problem of suffering in the world. But perhaps the best answer comes from those whose suffering goes beyond what we are able to imagine, and yet these believers experience the reality that God has united himself to them in their suffering.

Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere. An already very difficult situation has been made 100 times worse. How could a loving God let this happen?

On his Christian Broadcasting Network show Rev. Pat Robertson said that the nation of Haiti has been devastated by a large earthquake because its people "made a pact with the devil"

"Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it," Robertson said. "They were under the heel of the French ... and they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French.'" "True story," he continued. "And the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.' Ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after another."

The Old Testament certainly relates many accounts of nations being punished by God for idolatry and injustice. Some Christians continue to use this to explain current world events.
However in the Gospel of John we read "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." While He does not cause suffering he does give it purpose. It became the vehicle for our salvation when Jesus died on the cross.

None of us can choose to completely avoid suffering. However we can choose whether we will waste the experience or discover and realize God's purpose in the midst of it.

In 2005 when disastrous floods directly and indirectly claimed the lives of dozens of Guyanese and wiped out 65 per cent of our GDP, it also triggered truly enlightening, edifying and uplifting stories of heroism and co-operation, of sacrifice and self-denial and of what Guyanese can really be like. We learnt that it is when we are involved in the suffering of others that we find some of the most significant moments of our own lives as well.

**USE AID TO HAITI FOR GENUINE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: CCC**

“Without wanting to even appear to be minimizing the (very needed) interventions and efforts of so many well-intentioned persons and groups operating over the years in Haiti, we are of the considered opinion that the time has now come for all available resources to be placed at the disposal of genuine development co-operation.”

This is the view of the Caribbean Conferences of Churches expressed in a statement issued on Friday 15, three days after a powerful earthquake caused widespread devastation across the island.

The CCC, a grouping of 33 member churches in 34 territories across the Dutch, English, French and Spanish speaking territories of the region, feels that without such a thrust, “We shall continue – for decades to come – addressing symptoms and not root causes of a deep-seated social malady. In the given circumstances one is constrained to ask, for example ‘Was all the destruction, death and distress experienced the result of the 7.0 earthquake per se, or was not the factor of an over-crowded city with weak and compromised structures – all due to decades of continued impoverishment and underdevelopment – a major factor in the equation of devastation?’ The answer is clearly self-evident,” the statement said.

The CCC which is the recognized Regional Ecumenical Organization (REO) of the Caribbean and one of the major development agencies at work in the Caribbean today, pointed out that as an organisation that has accompanied the people of Haiti in various ways and circumstances over the last three decades, it has been concerned, for some time now, with the welfare/aid approach to Haiti that has been the dominant one over a protracted period of its history.

The CCC also revealed that it is in dialogue with key officials of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and other international bodies, including the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Geneva-based Action of Churches Together (ACT) Alliance. "This is with a view to both assessing the situation on the ground in Haiti and gauging what the CCC's best options might be in terms of a relevant and meaningful response in the situation.," the statement said.

**Agencies boost efforts**
Meanwhile Catholic aid agencies and world governments were boosting efforts to respond to the needs of hundreds of thousands of injured and homeless.

Agencies such as Jesuit Refugee Service and Catholic Relief Services as well as smaller organizations from around the world have raised millions of dollars to provide medical services, feed and shelter people and head off the rapid spread of disease.

Catholic Relief Services increased its pledge of aid for the impoverished nation to US$25 million, and it could go higher, said Pat Johns, director of safety and security for the Baltimore-based agency. CRS, which is coordinating the Catholic Church's response, reported it had collected US$13.1 million for earthquake relief as of early Jan. 19.

Caritas Internationalis, numerous other Catholic aid agencies and Catholic religious orders were working alongside CRS staff in a vast outpouring of assistance.

Jesuit-run hospitals and clinics in the Port-au-Prince neighborhoods of Turgeau, Haut Turgeau, Delmas and Canape Vert reopened. A health care facility in the quake-ravage town of Leogane, about 25 miles west of Port-au-Prince, also reopened, he told CNS Jan. 19.

**Stories of hope, sadness**

One of the thousands of victims in the Haitian earthquake was the first Haitian to become a Salesian Brother Hubert Sanon, 85.

He died in the Salesian compound that houses the National School of Arts and Trade. The number of students from the school believed dead later was estimated by the Salesians at up to 500.

Courage of Haitians "starts young," says U.S. nun who nursed hundreds. Sister Mary Finnick, a nurse who opened an impromptu triage and treatment center in a nearby soccer field after the quake.

"The children, though crying, did not have temper tantrums and cooperated as much as is possible for a 3-year-old when you make a splint, clean out a head wound and debride backs and legs," the nun said.

**CONSULTATIONS BEGIN ON FUTURE OF BRICKDAM SITE**

A group representing most of the various areas of involvement in the Catholic Church in Guyana has had its first meeting to consider the future of the buildings and plot at the Brickdam site. The location became vacant after the Jesuits who lived there for more than 150 years moved to a new residence in Queenstown in November. The consultation was set in the context of the medium and long term vision for the Catholic Church in the country and what sorts of development would be needed to support this vision.

Years ago many of the priests working in interior locations were Jesuits who would have stayed at their main house when in Georgetown. However today a new situation exists in which there are a number of Philippinos and Argentineans in the interior who need a place to stay when in the city. It was therefore proposed that a section of the empty building be set aside to house these and other visitors from out of town.

It was also suggested that the administrative offices of the pastoral area and Cathedral be moved into that building. It is believed that having all of these tasks located in one central area would have distinct advantages.
It was also pointed that there was urgent need for classrooms and proper meeting rooms for groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Questions were raised about whether parts of this building could also be put to this use.

The need, particularly of the young people of the parish for more facilities was also mentioned. It was therefore put forward that the grounds could be extended to put down a court for volley ball, basket ball and other out door activities.

The state of disrepair of the Brickdam Presbytery, the annex, and indeed the former Jesuit house was also pointed out. It was therefore recommended that decisions should be carefully considered since implementing them could entail the use of considerable funds.

_No consensus on what should be done was reached at the consultation and it was agreed that there should be more opportunities for suggestions to be put forward on this issue especially with a view to the long term._

**THIEVES RAID CHURCH AT DIAMOND**

Thieves broke into the Roman Catholic Church of St Joseph the Worker at Diamond on the East Bank, sometime between Wednesday night and Thursday morning. They carried away some of the sacred vessels used in the Mass namely a chalice and ciborium. The burglars also stole altar cloths and candle sticks. The bandits made a small hole in the front, wooden front door, which according to Parish Priest Father Keith Hardless, only a small child could have passed through. They then entered the unlocked sacristy where the stolen items were located. There was blood smears on the floor which seemed to indicate that one or more of the perpetrators may have been injured. Father Steve Patterson, who is in charge of the area in the absence of Fr John Persaud visited the church and decided on measures to secure the church. Father Hardless expressed surprise that the incident took place since the building if facing the public road and is very well lit at night. The Church was also broken into in 2004.

**A CELEBRATION OF HOPE AS JESUITS ORDAINED IN JAMAICA**

On December 30th, 2009, in the newly renovated Holy Trinity Cathedral, hundreds of the faithful of the Archdiocese of Kingston, Jamaica gathered to celebrate the ordination of two Jesuits, Michael Fernando Davidson and Rohan Gerald Tulloch by ordaining prelate, Archbishop Emeritus Lawrence A. Burke, SJ.

With scores of priests, deacons and religious from Jamaica and from across the world present, the two newly ordained young men were presented with great joy and deep consolation to the Church of Jamaica by Archbishop Donald Reece to thunderous applause. All present were deeply moved by the solemn but glorious gift of two sons of Jamaica to the mission of the Universal Church, and the service of our own Jamaican Church.
For the Society of Jesus in Jamaica (the "Jesuits"), too, the two ordinations were a milestone in the history of the Jesuits in the English-speaking Caribbean - a history that has spanned over one hundred and sixty years. It was a profound moment of hope that the particular charism of the Society of Jesus - involving special ministries in education, spirituality, and the social apostolate - might further become expressed in the life and faith of Jamaicans, recreating the Jesuits according to the manner and culture of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

Mindful of the great tradition of excellence of the Jesuit flagship schools St. George's College and Campion College, Archbishop Burke exhorted the two newly ordained to lives of service in the Jamaican Church, with particular attention to the work and ministry of education.

Frs. Davidson and Tulloch follow in the footsteps of the many great Jamaican Jesuits such as Archbishop Samuel Carter, Frs. Alwyn Harry, Roy Campbell, John Alexander, Charles and Sydney Judah, Maurice Feres, and of course, Archbishop Burke himself. By the grace of God, these newly ordained young Jesuits inspire the Church with hope. *(From the Catholic Opinion)*

**YOUNG JESUITS ON THREE MONTH STINT IN GUYANA**

Two Jesuit novices - men in training to become priests – arrived in Guyana recently from the novitiate in Birmingham, England. Mr Samuel Overloop and Mr Mick O'Connor will be spending three months here familiarizing themselves with the works done by the Jesuits in Guyana.

**FATHER BARRAZZA SAYS ADIOS**

North West churches recently said farewell and heartfelt thanks to Fr. Oscar Barrazza, of the Institute of the Incarnate Word, (IVE). He worked for the past four years both on the Essequibo Coast/Pomeroon River and in Santa Rosa, Moruca.

According to the Diocesan Newsletter he touched the lives of countless people and has always given them an example of the joy that comes with serving God alone. He has consecrated his life to Christ and the Church and this can truly be seen by his faithful dedication to bringing souls to the Sacraments; the most valuable gift He, as priest, can leave the people.

Our thoughts and prayers are with him as he begins the new mission, the Lord has entrusted to him in the country of Papua New Guinea. We pray that the Lord may bless him with strength and wisdom to carry out the priestly ministry effectively in the new mission.
ST. JOSEPH, MODEL FOR ALL FATHERS
FROM FRANCIS QUAMINA FARRIER IN MARYLAND, USA

IT’S OK IF POLICE WANT MORE POWERFUL GUNS TO KILL YOUNG OFFENDERS, BUT WE REFUSE TO ALLOW CORPORAL PUNISHMENT WHEN THE FIRST SIGNS OF DEVIANCE APPEAR...

St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, has been projected over the centuries, as a model father; a hard-working carpenter who delivered only quality work to his customers, and took exceptional care of his family. The church honours him as "St. Joseph the Worker", and "the patron saint of the dying."

In Guyana, there are a number of churches named in his honour. The St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Georgetown is also named to his honour.

Two Sundays ago on the Feast of the Holy Family, I attended Mass at the Church of St. Joseph in Maryland, USA. The chief celebrant was a visiting priest from Nigeria. He is young, and was ordained just three years ago. He is one of ten children, and most of his homily was about his boyhood in a home in which his mother and father exercised corporal punishment for the disciplining of their children.

The young priest expressed the view that a little more corporal punishment of delinquent children in our modern world might be a good thing. And the congregation showed their approval with applause. As he spoke, I wondered why it is that corporal punishment is condemned by some influential individuals in Guyana, and other countries as well, even at a time when many are advocating that Law Enforcement should acquire more powerful weapons to kill the criminals and bandits, who were not too long ago delinquent children.

The father of the young Nigerian man who took an explosive device on a Delta aircraft, on Christmas day of all days, had informed the United States Embassy in Lagos, Nigeria, of his concern of his son's more recent extreme activities. A father was bold and decent enough to turn in his misguided son.

In Guyana today, many influential individuals seem to be on a band wagon of focusing exclusively on delinquent fathers, totally ignoring the many good fathers in our society. It is not easy being a good father in today's Guyana. It is made even more difficult with all the distractions around, including peer pressure. It is unlikely that any of the good Guyanese fathers would be canonized for their work as St. Joseph was - he was exceptional - but the good fathers of Guyana need to be recognized. There are indeed, those organizations that do honour the good fathers, especially on Fathers Day.

The issue of corporal punishment remains controversial however. So, too is the gunning down of criminals, real and perceived. Most of those criminals and bandits had no good father to give guidance... and the corporal punishment when necessary... if necessary. There was no St. Joseph in their very early lives.
(A PRAYER FOR HAITI)

Jesus, once more, I see you carry your cross through the streets of Jerusalem.
You are a Victim.
I see a Victim of the self-centered, blinded, Jewish Priests.
I see a Victim of Herod's abusive power and lust.
I see the might of the Roman Empire trapped in the hands of Pontius Pilate, aiding and abetting this cruel act.
This is no time to sit and argue.
This is not the time for the despairing spectator.
O Lamb of God.

Let me come like the Women of Jerusalem and cry out.
Compel me like Simon of Cyrene, to lift the burden, to support, to lighten the load.
Help me to stand like Mary; keeping station at the cross.

I embrace your body and lift you for burial.
I seal your tomb.
Then in the hours of the dark night
I blend your spices and prepare your herbs of hope
For that Glorious day of Resurrection.

Lord, like you, I see our brothers and sisters buried in the rubble of Haiti.
I watch them burdened down with this cross.
Let my shock and tears not paralyze me into helplessness.

Use my voice for them. Help me cry out.
Move my heart beyond the pain and grief of mourning.
I will keep Station. Stand in solidarity. We will join together.
Compelled in love and compassion we move to lift the burden, to lighten their cross.

Your body is stripped. Your body is broken.
Thousands have died.

We embrace this dark night, the cloud that covers that land.
We blend the spices to bind and heal the wounds.
We gather the herbs of hope as we wait the morning light.
You are our light and our life.

Loving Son of God, dear Jesus
Fill our spirits that our hope in you is secured
Lift our heads higher to see beyond the horizon, that limits our vision to that Glorious Resurrection. You are the Resurrection.
You are the Light of the world.

HISTORIC HAITIAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL IN RUINS

An aerial view shows the ruins of the Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Port-au-Prince Jan. 14, two days after a catastrophic earthquake rocked the capital of Haiti.
(CNS/Reuters)