

*Laura Kelly traveled to Haiti from January 23-30, 2018. She related her trip experience to parishioners and friends of St. Patrick-St. Anthony at all the Masses on the weekend of February 17-18, 2018.*

My name is Laura Kelly and I am 20-year old. I went on the most recent sister parish trip to St. Geneviève in Zoranje, Haiti. It was my first trip to Haiti. I have always wanted to go, but I did not know when or with whom. So, when I saw info about the trip on the St. Patrick St. Anthony website, I went for it.

All I wanted to do is to get a chance to see how these people live after hearing so much about the earthquakes and the destruction they cause for the Haitian people time and time again.

At our sister parish St. Geneviève in Zoranje, we met many people both at the church and throughout the village. Father Cid was able to take us on walks through the paths heading up and down the mountains and streets, and I have to say this was the most meaningful and significant part of the trip for me. We got to see people in their own daily environment, not in their Sunday best, not trying to impress or please anyone else but living and working day to day with all the resources that they could find. Poverty in Haiti is far worse than I expected. Of course I knew going in that it was going to be bad, but it's worse than you can imagine. Walking up the mountain, we'd see babies and small children wearing rags and running around the mountain with nothing to put on their feet. Yet, they did not seem fazed. They were too mesmerized by us visitors, and often followed us around and tried to talk to us.

One time, we were walking and a very little girl just walked behind me and put her hand in mine. We just walked hand in hand. Similar instances happened to me over the course of the trip. I made many friends among young children and even some my own age that lived around the rectory at St. Geneviève. I became close with them and they like to use Facebook and WhatsApp to see how I am doing, quite often actually. Overall the thing that touch me the most was the children. They are so innocent, and so pure, and they were so thrilled to see us on our visit despite their situation.

The feast of St. Geneviève was a wonderful day for us and for the parishioners at the church. There was lots of food, and partying. The church was packed to maximum capacity. This just goes to show that the Haitian people never lose their faith no matter how many times they get knocked down. So, we should not lose faith in them. Please join us on future immersion trips, and you'll be happy you did. This was the greatest experience I've ever had in my life and I can't wait to go back. Thank you and God bless.



*Consider traveling to Haiti on September 5-11, 2018.*