

UNSHAKABLE FAITH

HAITI EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE LIFE NIGHT

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Haiti Earthquake Response Life Night LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CATECHISM REFERENCE

- # 309-314
- # 1929-1933
- # 1939-1942

SCRIPTURE

- Isaiah 25:4
- Isaiah 41:10
- Matthew 5:1-12
- Matthew 25:35-45
- Luke 6:20-22
- John 15: 1-13

KEY CONCEPTS

- Because of sin, evil and natural disasters are a part of our world. God can bring good from the most devastating destruction.
- We are called to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ because we are united through our baptism.
- Our response should be one of prayer and action. We are called to live the Gospel and bring a message of hope and love to those in need.

GOAL

The goal of this Life Night is to discuss the recent events in Haiti and help teens understand why it is important that we, as a faith community, respond. The night will help the group process the event, the needs of the community in Haiti and plan a group response.

ABOUT THIS NIGHT

This Life Night was written to provide youth ministry programs a means to discuss the situation in Haiti after the January 12, 2010 earthquake and to assist teens in responding to the situation. The night starts with a sense of world turned upside down, literally. Images from the Haiti – prior to the earthquake and afterwards can be displayed. In the teaching, teens will learn why our faith calls us to respond and how that response is an outpouring of Christ's love for others. There is time in the night for small groups to discuss the situation in Haiti and offer ideas and plan for how they can respond. The night closes with a prayer service for all those affected by the earthquake.

ENVIRONMENT

In your gathering space, create sense of a world turned upside down. Turn tables, couches, and chairs over. Rip posters (or make your own posters to rip); have paper strewn all over the room. If possible, add in sound effects - sirens, people yelling, crying, news reports from the scene. You may want to have Core Members walk through the room with big flashlights, shining in various places. Around the room, place images of the destruction in Haiti. At the front and center of the room, have a table with candles and a crucifix untouched. The idea is to create a sense in the room that despite the chaos, Christ remains our strength and hope.

MEDIA SUGGESTIONS

Download images or slideshows from varying news sites (CNN, BBC, Google, Getty Images, etc). Create a slideshow of images of Haiti before and after the earthquake.

You want consider not having a meal or snacks this evening and donating the money instead.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (5 min)

The youth minister should have the teens find a seat in the midst of the chaotic room. Core Members should be interspersed throughout where the teens are sitting. The youth minister welcomes all the teens to the Life Night and introduces any teens at the Life Night for the first time.

BEFORE & AFTER (5 min)

View a slideshow of images of Haiti prior to the earthquake and after the earthquake.

PROCLAIM *10 Minutes*

“UNSHAKABLE FAITH”

TEACHING (10 min)

This teaching will explain the situation in Haiti and guide the teens to understand why we need to respond. Below is an outline of the teaching:

1. What Happened

On Tuesday, January 12, just before 5 p.m. local time, a 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, near the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Haiti, an island nation in Caribbean, is the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. It is a long-suffering nation, one that has a history of dictatorship, violent power struggles and high crime. Haiti is a country of extreme poverty, harsh living conditions, an extremely vulnerable place, especially for women and children. Prior to the earthquake, 80% of Haiti's population lived well below the poverty line. Many organizations and groups have long established humanitarian programs in Haiti – building schools, houses and churches; staffing medical clinics, running orphanages, creating clean water supply systems– doing whatever they can to alleviate the poverty and instability of this fragile nation.

But on Tuesday January 12, just before 5 p.m., all that changed. An earthquake of intense proportions devastated this incredibly fragile country. Destruction such as this doesn't happen to one side of city or to a single neighborhood or community. It happened to everyone in the area. In the span of seconds, everyone was without a home, school buildings, churches, stores, and hospitals. The presidential palace, tourist hotels and the national Catholic cathedral were destroyed. Suddenly, the entire city is homeless and hospitals are destroyed, all businesses gone. This event happened to everyone and everything in the area. What was already fragile has now been reduced to rubble, literally.

Imagine if your own home and everything around you was destroyed. Who do you lean on for support?

2. Solidarity

The Gospel of John gives us the image of Jesus as the vine and we are the branches (John 15: 1-13). We are all connected in Christ, one human family. Our brothers and sisters in Christ extend far beyond this room, this parish, this community, or this state. Our family extends to the far reaches of the world and into the streets and towns and villages of places like Haiti. Today, more so than ever, our brothers and sisters are crying out to us. They need our help and we need be their hope.

Our faith, our church, asks us to be in solidarity with one another: to stand together, to fight for justice, to work for peace. This is just one of the elements of Catholic Social Justice teachings. Pope Paul VI taught, “if you want peace, work for justice.” As a Church, we have been working for peace and justice in Haiti for years. There are so many relief organizations, peacekeeping forces and humanitarian organizations working in Haiti. They too are affected by the earthquake - they have lost buildings and supplies, and in many cases, lives.

So we are being asked to not just lend a hand to the poorest of poor, but to those who give of their lives to stand in solidarity and work for justice in Haiti. Prior to the earthquake, there was much hope in Haiti. After suffering through four hurricanes in 2008, the country was moving forward once again and many humanitarian leaders and political leaders held great hope for the country to start to overcome its challenges. With a set back this great, the need for hope and solidarity is even greater.

3. Our Gospel Call

We are not to stand idle while another of us suffers. We know that. Look at the ministries of a parish – we bring the Eucharist to the homebound, we bring meals to those who are ill or suffering, we donate our clothes, household items, and food to those in need. As a community, we give from the gifts we have, whether they are monetary in nature or are gifts of our time and service.

But what does this mean for you and I? Jesus calls us to love and to love all people. “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). If we are truly to live a life of love, of Christ's love, then we must respond in love. When we do so, hope is given and faith is strengthened. In giving of ourselves, we share in the challenges and struggles of those suffering. We help to carry the burden, to ease the pain and together we rebuild lives.

4. But where is God in all this destruction? Where do Haitians find faith?

In the first 24 hours following the earthquake, a Haitian radio station was able to post this on their website:

"Today it is very difficult to maintain hope, but as the saying goes, 'hope makes us live, so let us all join hands and keep hope alive.'"

Natural disasters occur. Death occurs. Tragedies occur, but we find God in the response to these events. The world's response – governments, organizations, individuals – was swift and urgent. Churches and dioceses are holding special Masses, vigils, prayer services, second collections and fundraisers. People are supporting neighbors and friends who can't get in touch with loved ones in Haiti. There is an outpouring of love and support, the work of Christ through our very own lives.

"For you are a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in distress." (Isaiah 25:4)

You could look at the pictures of Haiti and see nothing but destruction and helplessness. But if you truly look you will see people giving of themselves. Those images represent faith, hope and love. Our support, be it physical or financial, is hope to a broken country. Hope can always be found through the gifts of others.

Haiti was broken and impoverished before the earthquake. Yet the Haitians have always been a people of rich in hope. Their hope will rise out of this rubble because you and I took the time to show them God's love. Maybe it is only the dollar we have in our pocket. But that dollar will equate to a meal, a blanket, or a glass of clean water. Maybe their hope will rise further because we acted – through giving financially, through asking our parents and friends if they will donate, through our prayers and through the people we will become as we respond to God's call.

5. What can we do?

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25: 35-36, 40)

What can we do as a Life Teen family, as a parish family, as an individual? We can give our immediate response tonight – we could donate all cash and coins we have on us. And that is great! But what can we do bigger than that, more long term than that?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 min)

Use this portion of the night to allow your teens to process the information they have just heard and to discuss ways they can respond with love and hope to the crisis in Haiti. Below are some questions that can be discussed in small groups:

1. After seeing the images of Haiti and hearing about the situation there, what thoughts do you have? How does it make you feel?
2. Where have you seen hope in the way the world has responded to the earthquake in Haiti?
3. How can one person make a difference in a problem of this scale?
4. How are you called to respond? What can we do now and in the long term? (Discuss the long term needs of Haiti)

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (20 min)

As a large group, ask the teens to share some ideas on how they can respond to this tragedy. As an entire group, make a commitment to one or more of the ideas. Ask for Core and teen volunteers to help organize the response. (If prior to the night you already planned what your group's response would be, have each group write a short prayer or petition that can be used during the Send portion of the night.)

Some possible response ideas:

1. If your parish is having a special collection, find an easy way for teens to contribute to this collection. Make an on-going collection at Life Night for the rest of the year and donate the funds through an approved relief organization such as Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Food for the Poor, Red Cross, etc.
2. Encourage teens to post something on their Facebook pages to promote awareness and encourage giving
3. If there is a local Haitian community in your area, discuss ways you can reach out to them.
4. Encourage the teens, their families and the greater parish to pray. While it may seem far-removed, prayer is very much needed in this situation. Work with your pastor to organize a special prayer service or vigil.
5. Get a list of people in your area that are going or are in Haiti doing relief and rescue work. Work out a way to pray for each individual.

6. If there are any families in your parish who are missing or lost friends or family in Haiti, discuss ways you can personally support them. Maybe it is bringing meals or having a Mass said in their honor.
7. Write thank you letters to business, organizations or governments who are contributing to the relief efforts, especially any local organizations.

God of all creation, as we weep with our family in Haiti, console us. In this time of crisis, open our eyes to look beyond the disaster to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in Haiti, as Christ sees us. Be with all creation, strengthen us in solidarity with those living and working in Haiti. All creation returns to you in mourning and your grace guides our efforts to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, comfort the grieving and stand for justice. With your mercy, sustain us at this time as we continue to work for peace and justice.

SEND *15 Minutes*

PRAYER SERVICE (15 min)

To close the Life Night, set up a special prayer space in your gathering space or move to the church or chapel. Create a special display of images from Haiti and several candles to provide light.

Open your prayer in song.

Have a teen or Core Member read Matthew 25: 31-46.

Use this time for a member of each small group to read their prayer petitions or use the following:

For the people of Haiti, that they may be comforted in their time of suffering. We pray to the Lord (Lord, hear our prayer)

For the families of those missing, may God's healing presence comfort them in this time of uncertainty. We pray to the Lord (Lord, hear our prayer)

For those providing relief, that God may give them strength and courage to assist those who are most need. We ask that you watch over them and keep them safe. We pray to the Lord (Lord, hear our prayer)

For all who have died, that they may rest in the eternal peace of God. We pray to the Lord (Lord, hear our prayer)

Have a time of silent prayer, then invite the teens to offer their own intentions.

Close with the following prayer (courtesy of Catholic Relief Services)

Close the night with the Hail Mary and Ave Maria. Have a basket for teens to give money and spare change to a relief organization. Consider having this basket available at Life Nights for the next several months.