

# Bend Toward Solidarity and Kindness

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Madam Ana and I with our neighbors during our Easter Party 2019.

We commemorated the 10th Anniversary of the Earthquake that killed 250,000 people and displaced from 1.5 to 3 million people on the 12th of January. We, however, still feel the aftershocks of the disaster.

The majority of families we serve live on a strip of land that belongs to no one now. It was supposed to be a running street. They call it Vilaj Trankil. They have settled there for the past 10 years, almost after the earthquake. While some families come and go, many have stay there. This is their home. Our Pastoral Center (Sant Pastoral Pasyonis ) started in 2017 serving these people who were displaced. The

situation has only worsened due to the resent political unrest.

Haiti, after two months of continual violence in the streets due to the political turmoil, has turned violent for everyone. Kidnappings and robberies are on the rise. Life is fragile, that's how our leaders talk about the current situation.

Within our neighbors we have seen how the stronger pick on the weak. More than one family has been a victim of harassment and intimidation by gangsters who want them to leave their home in order for them to take it over and resale it for a few hundred dollars. It is survival of the ruthless.

I have tried to accompany one of those persons affected by this. Madam Anna, a 73-year-old woman from the province of Jacmel came to Vilaj Trankil about 9 years ago. She has a piece of land no bigger than 20 ft. by 20ft. Through the donations of a foreign volunteer, I was able to buy some material to construct a better shelter with wood and metal sheets for her. She did all she could to turn the shack into a home. I went over to her house to pray and talk to the neighbors about her situation with no avail. The supposed owner of the land is asking for almost One-thousand US Dollars for it. He claims it was his. Everyone knows that he lived in the area until he was put in prison for killing a person about eight year ago.

Now, he is out and he is hungry and willing to do anything to get some money even if it is at the cost of an older person that has nothing to her name. The man asked to meet with me. I refused. I know what he wants. If I lend him a

finger, he, and others like him, will try to grab the whole arm. We are thinking of other alternatives for Madam Anna.



Among these neighbors, there is a young single mother of two named Chivan that recently asked me if I could lend her some money to pay for a year's rent. She needs 400 USD to pay for a small room with a metal teen roof and concrete floors. All she needs from me is 100 USD. I have accepted to let her barrow the money, because she is the one that took Madam Anna into her small little room for the past three months she has been harassed.

Life is fragile in Haiti, no doubt. The desperation can make you bend toward ruthlessness like exploiting the weak or it can make you bend towards solidarity and kindness. I want to make sure that my heart, and I pray that yours, bends towards the side of Christ just like Chivan's did.