

FLORIDACatholic

MIAMI ARCHDIOCESE

Citing 'urgent need,' archdiocese seeks donations for Haiti, Cuba

First post-Matthew shipload sent to Haiti; planning begins for second phase of relief

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | Less than 24 hours after being spared the ravages of a Category 4 storm, the Archdiocese of Miami turned its sights toward helping others who were not so fortunate. Exactly a week later, 22 pallets of rice, canned goods, hygienic supplies and diapers were being loaded onto a ship for transport to the hardest-hit southwestern peninsula.

"And more to come," said an elated Father Reginald Jean-Mary, administrator of Notre Dame d'Haiti Mission in Little Haiti, as he watched an army of volunteers packing, wrapping and loading the donated goods onto pallets.

A total of 47 pallets were to be taken to Haiti on the Betty K VII, a "pallet carrier" provided by Seacoast Shipping that was set to sail Oct. 16 and arrive in Miragoâne, on the peninsula's northern coast, around Oct. 19. From there, the Haitian Church's Caritas agency would transport the relief supplies overland



Mikai Edward, 42, lost her home where she lives with her six children and husband in front of the ocean in the Zoranje neighborhood of Roche Bateau. (MARIE ARAGO | CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES)

to its local affiliates in the areas that bore the brunt of Matthew's fury: Jérémie in the peninsula's northwest and Les Cayes in the south, as well as Môle-Saint-Nicolas in the remote northwestern tip of the country.

"It's a beautiful day," said Father Jean-Mary as he stood in his parish hall, which until an

hour earlier had been brimming with relief supplies. "In one hour, everything has been packed. That's the beauty this morning, the solidarity of the people."

His volunteer army consisted of adults studying Creole and English literacy in the Pierre Toussaint Center on the parish grounds

HOW TO HELP

Donations may be made through the Catholic Charities website, www.ccadm.org. Click on the "Donate" tab, then on "General Donations" and under the "supporting" box select "Disaster Relief — Hurricane Matthew."

Donations via check may be made payable to: Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami, 1505 N.E. 26 St., Wilton Manors, FL 33305. Please note "Disaster Relief — Hurricane Matthew" in the memo line.

— a program offered by Miami-Dade County Public Schools. All of the students are Haitian, and they learn to read and write in their native Creole before being taught English.

"The resurrection of Haiti is not about the millions (of dollars)," Father Jean-Mary said, looking around at the volunteers. "It's about the people."

He noted that Seacoast Shipping, which offered to transport up to 60 pallets for free, is owned by Haitians who have succeeded in Miami. So is Diakonos International, one of two companies which each donated a 40-foot shipping container for future trips.

'WHO'S THERE? THE CHURCH'

At the same time, Father Jean-Mary was al-

PLEASE SEE **HURRICANE, 12**

'FOR I WAS IN PRISON ...'

Capital punishment: Is it killing us all?

Death penalty and juvenile justice discussed at first-ever 'From Justice to Mercy' conference

JIM DAVIS
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | "The more you know about the death penalty," said Mark Elliott, "the less you like it."

As the director of Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, Elliott would naturally say that. But he had lots of company at a recent conference called "From Justice to Mercy."

Here's what fellow panelist George F. Kain said about capital punishment: "The death penalty is a barbaric practice that has lost its place in society. For every group involved — police, attorneys, corrections officers, the execution team — it's traumatic. It's a death sentence for all of us. It destroys us as a people."

The topic was one of two, along with juvenile justice, at the first conference of its kind in the archdiocese. The seven-hour conference drew 200 specialists and volunteers Sept. 24 to Corpus Christi Parish in Miami. The conference took a two-pronged approach of fact and advocacy. The goal was simple, said Deacon Edgardo Farias, the organizer: raising awareness of the two focus issues.



"We need more consciousness about respecting human life," said Deacon Farias, director of the archdiocesan Detention Ministry since 2006. "This is the first goal for government. We need to humanize the system. If not, it's not a government for the people."

Those attending came from a broad range of jobs and vocations. They included chaplains, lawyers, social workers, businessmen, volunteers in detention ministries and non-Catholic pastors.

"All Christians need to focus on social issues," said the Rev. Pierre E. Petit-Frere of Agape Church of God in Fort Lauderdale. "We should not be stressing only the theory of Christianity. We

should be putting it into practice."

After a keynote address by Auxiliary Bishop Peter Baldacchino, the day settled into two panels of four persons each, followed by question-and-answer time. Providing Spanish-language summaries of their talks was Ingrid Delgado, associate for social concerns/respect life at the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops.

REFORM NOT PUNISHMENT

Florida's efforts to deal with young offenders go back more than a century, according to Elisa Quesada, a visiting law professor at Florida International University. She said the state recognized in 1899 that juveniles "needed to be reformed, not punished."

PLEASE SEE **PRISON, 11**

'FOR I WAS IN PRISON ...'

Ministry reveals Christ within and to the incarcerated

JIM DAVIS

Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | Deacon Edgardo Farias still remembers what Archbishop John Favalora told him a decade ago: "You need to train the volunteers to see Christ in the inmates. And they must see Christ in us."

That may be especially hard when dealing with people who break laws or commit violence. But for Deacon Farias, director of the archdiocesan Detention Ministry, it's at the core of his mission.

"God was the first missionary," Deacon Farias said in an inter-

view after organizing the diocese's first-ever conference on juvenile justice and capital punishment. "God came to visit us, not only in prison, but in every situation. It's my calling, my passion, to be there for people suffering in incarceration."

The Detention Ministry, which goes back three decades, offers Mass to about 700 inmates per week in 34 facilities, from Monroe County's Plantation Key Detention Center to the state-level Hollywood Work Release Center to the Federal Correctional Institution in southwestern Miami-Dade.

The ministry also coordinates

an annual spiritual retreat in five state prisons, with help from other groups including Cursillo, Emmaus and Life in the Spirit. It supplies information on social services to families of the incarcerated through its St. Dismas Outreach Program. It even posts 12 free videos on topics such as restorative justice, women and children behind bars, and the Angel Tree project to donate Christmas gifts to children of inmates.

"Our job is to recruit people, then equip and send them," Deacon Farias said. "We're open for every Catholic movement that wants to help us."

He currently can call on 250 volunteers, including seven priests and seven deacons. He also provides training and webinars (www.detentionministry.org/volunteers.html.) But he can still use more because of turnover.

"I see many people come enthusiastic, then they leave because they move or change jobs," he said. "We need more people to share the Gospel, to share their experience with God."

The Detention Ministry is actually a third career for Deacon Farias, 57. Originally a fifth- and

PLEASE SEE **MINISTRY, 12**



Deacon Edgardo Farias has directed the archdiocesan Detention Ministry since 2006. (COURTESY)

PRISON

FROM 1

Over the decades, though, the state see-sawed between tough and compassionate approaches. With the widely reported murders of tourists in the late 1980s and 1990s, the attitude shifted from "If they do an adult crime, they do adult time," Quesada said. "They weren't being helped; they were being abused. Some juveniles got life without parole."

More change came with a 2012 Supreme Court decision that ruled children were different from adults, Quesada said. That led to reforms in Florida, and increasing use of "diversion" programs for youths instead of prison terms.

Miami-Dade's Juvenile Assessment Center, for example, routes them to various programs for treatment and rehabilitation, such as the State Attorney Growth and Enrichment Center (SAGE), a mentoring program. "Something has been done right," remarked Todd Bass, chief of the state attorney's juvenile division in Miami-Dade.

One rising problem is increasing gun violence since 2015, Bass said. "The juvenile system can't handle violent offenders. We can't even hold them more than 21 days."

That got some pushback from Miami-Dade Public Defender Carlos F. Martinez. He said that even violent young offenders can't grasp the consequences of their deeds, especially if they have been mistreated by parents and other adults.

"Yet we're hearing 'no mercy' if a juvenile has committed an offense with a firearm," Martinez said. "He is a human being — an undeveloped human being, not a fully developed, thinking adult."

He urged more latitude for judges to decide if a case should go to adult court or the juvenile justice system. "I see juvenile court



Auxiliary Bishop Peter Baldacchino addresses the Justice to Mercy conference at Corpus Christi Parish.

as a court of mercy. Let judges be judges and decide cases on their merits."

NO MORE EXECUTIONS

The afternoon session, bluntly titled "No More Executions!" launched a volley of attacks on capital punishment. Among them:

- Sometimes, the innocent are executed.
- The measure doesn't keep police safe, despite what some have claimed.
- Families and friends of the

condemned are not allowed to attend the execution.

- The system condemns the poor and mentally ill, and people of color more often than others.

Capital punishment even costs the state more — \$1 million per person each week, five times the cost of life imprisonment.

Dale Recinella, a Catholic chaplain for Florida's death row inmates, cited research he did for his book "The Biblical Truth About America's Death Penalty." He identified 44 conditions in the Bi-



A panel of experts discusses juvenile justice for the Justice to Mercy conference at Corpus Christi Parish, Miami. (PHOTOS BY JIM DAVIS | FC)

ble for putting someone to death, and said that American law meets none of them.

"The only similarity is that someone gets killed by the government," he said. "My gut or emotions may scream for a death sentence, but that's not in God's word."

ALTERNATIVES TO DEATH PENALTY

Recinella added that the Bible also allows people to find alternatives to the death penalty, which would also protect innocent lives. The issue is especially large in this state, said Delgado of the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops. From 2010 to 2015, she said, 16 counties in the U.S. sentenced five or more people to death, and four of those counties are in Florida, including Miami-Dade.

On the other hand, she said, 19 states no longer have a death penalty, and others have declared moratoriums on the practice. She added that the U.S. is in a minority of nations that allow capital punishment — along with places like China, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

"What kind of human rights company is that to keep?" Delgado asked.

What to do? The panelists called for people to pressure officials to reform the system through mea-

sures like phoning and emailing. "There's a need for a grass-roots approach," said Kain, a professor of justice at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury. "There's more than enough people to get the job done. It's a matter of connecting people."

Conference-goers said they felt encouraged at what they heard. "The speakers brought so much great information and hope and light, bringing justice and mercy to both those issues," said Patrice Schwermer of Key West, where she is outreach coordinator for archdiocesan Catholic Charities. "We are moving in good directions."

Deacon Ray Aguado, coordinator of advocacy and justice for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, applauded the youth diversion programs in Miami-Dade. He said the Catholic Church needs to be involved in justice reform.

"The Church is the moral compass," said Deacon Aguado, who was planning another prison ministry conference in Tallahassee Nov. 19. "The Church teaches how to treat those who are marginalized, who don't have a voice. Everyone should have hope, even when they're in prison." ■

For information on how to help with the Detention Ministry, please visit www.detentionministry.org.

‘FOR I WAS IN PRISON ...’

Men, prison and abortion

Pro-lifers told connection exists, and inmates are finding healing through Rachel's Vineyard

ANNE DIBERNARDO

Florida Catholic correspondent

HIALEAH | Those who say abortion is a women's issue might be surprised to hear the experiences of Donna Gardner.

"If someone had told me six years ago I would be traveling to two maximum security prisons to minister Rachel's Vineyard to men I would have told them they were crazy — but that's exactly what I do," Gardner told about 300 people in attendance at the fourth annual luncheon to benefit the North Dade/West Broward Pregnancy Help Center.

Gardner is the coordinator of Rachel's Vineyard, a post-abortion healing program, for the Diocese of Palm Beach. A ministry of Priests for Life, the retreat is offered to both women and men who are trying to heal from their abortion experiences. As a result of Gardner's work, the program is now being considered in prisons throughout the nation, as well as one in Poland and another in Ireland.

Gardner traced the origin of her ministry to an inmate who shared his feelings with Tom Lawlor, former prison ministry director for the Palm Beach Diocese. The inmate was feeling haunted because he had pressured three different women he had gotten pregnant into having abortions. Surprised that a man was talking about abortions, Lawlor invited Gardner to speak at the annual prison ministry meeting in 2011.

Her presentation converted at least one skeptic. Deacon Donald Battiston had reasoned that men don't have abortions. But after hearing Gardner speak, he



Keynote speaker Donna Gardner, Rachel's Vineyard coordinator for the Diocese of Palm Beach, poses with Project Joseph counselor Joseph King. (ANNE DIBERNARDO | FC)

contrived a way to offer Rachel's Vineyard at both the Martin and Okeechobee correctional institutions.

PTSD

During her research, Gardner was surprised to see "tons" of articles on the topic of inmates and abortions. She was most impacted by an interview that showed many men were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of abortion. "The statistics were over the top," Gardner said.

Her findings were corroborated when an anonymous survey issued to the inmates at both of the prisons indicated that 90 percent had been involved in an abortion experience that hurt them. Six weeks later, she began her first Rachel's Vineyard retreat at the Martin Correctional Institution, a level-5 maximum security prison in Indiantown. Rachel's Vineyard is typically a weekend retreat, but in this case it was given over 10 weekly sessions that lasted two hours.

Gardner described the red tape involved in entering the maximum security prison: the pat-down, the escort through three electronic doors, and the electronic body alarm she was given to wear on her hip so that any time she felt fearful, she could call the guards to her aid. In six years

'It's not what you think about men in prison. They longed for their children and somehow recognized that life went wrong after their abortion experience.'

Donna Gardner

of ministry, she noted, she has never had to use the alarm.

"So here we were: five inmates, three seasoned prison ministers with a crash course in post-abortion healing and me, the token woman in a very male world," Gardner recalled.

She wondered if the inmates would allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to share. But on the first day, without prompting, they began to unload the hurt, broken trust, remorse and deep grieving for lost fatherhood.

"It's not what you think about men in prison. They longed for their children and somehow recognized that life went wrong after their abortion experience," Gardner said, admitting to her own preconceived notions about inmates. "That was it. I was in hook, line and sinker. I thought, this is what Jesus taught us to do — go to the forgotten and love them."

As the weeks progressed, Gardner and the ministers observed that the men were angry and displaying symptoms of PTSD: anxiety, shame, low self-esteem, guilt, numbness, a sense of worthlessness, nightmares, depression, risky behavior and addiction. They also opened up about their relationship with women and their living children.

Many men are unaware that their emotions are the direct result of an abortion experience, Gardner said. "Many may say they have these behaviors because they were incarcerated, and while that may be accurate, the true source of these feelings started at the death of their aborted child, as many of them have admitted. Not protecting their unborn child led them to this warrior behavior. We know that. It's a psychological truth that has been exposed through investigation and research," said Gardner, who holds a master's degree in counseling and psychology.

"I personally speak to the tragedy that women suffer, and when they hear my own story it immediately connects them to the mother of their own children. Some of the men have had as many as 13 abortions; they come from every walk of life and religious background. Abortion knows no prejudice — it crosses all religions and denominations," Gardner said.

She concluded her talk by describing the profound transformation of four men who were able to "connect the dots" in that first retreat, calling it "the tip of the iceberg."

One of them is Tim, who found so much hope and healing that he wrote an article for the *Martin Correctional Times*, inviting 1,500 inmates to come to the retreat. While the other three are serving life sentences, Gardner said, Tim has 25 of his 32-year sentence left to spend in prison.

These four men are now trained and certified Rachel's Vineyard facilitators. They plan the retreat sessions for other prisoners and lead the groups while Gardner and the prison ministers are on hand to guide and direct questions they may not be able to handle.

TRANSFORMED LIVES

"All that have come through Rachel's Vineyard have been touched by the healing power of God and they have transformed their lives to live for Our Lord," Gardner said. "My favorite part is our last class, the memorial service where men memorialize their children. Some write letters while others sing, draw pictures or write poems."

"The best part is all of the alumni from the past groups attend the memorial service so there's this beautiful brotherhood of life building behind the wall. It's the love of their children that has brought them together. Many of them may not have known each other, but when they meet each other at the memorial service a bond begins to form," she said.

After the retreat, the men enter a post-care program — a 40-day fast from negative thinking — to continue the transformation.

Gardner and her team hope to do some research they can present to government officials, showing them how abortion is hurting men, so much so that prisons are filled with post-abortive fathers.

"Abortion isn't just a women's issue. It's an 'everyone' issue. It affects the whole family — grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews," Gardner said.

She noted that there are 57 million men and women in the U.S. alone who have had abortions. "They are sitting in the pews of our churches. When you talk about abortion, always include the healing love of God, especially during this Year of Mercy," she advised. ■

NEED A PRAYER?

Send in your prayer requests and we will include your needs in our prayers. Mail to: Florida Catholic, P.O. Box 4993, Orlando, FL 32802-4993 or visit our website at www.thefloridacatholic.org. Please send no money. Just pray for us in return and for the intentions of all Florida's bishops.