



**Saint Gabriel Parish Builds its School- 1<sup>st</sup>– 13th Grades**  
 Update: This building is finished; furniture is still needed.  
 Article updated: June 24, 2020

In Feb. 2008 Father Bernard Desras, pastor at the church of Saint Gabriel (SG) in Lascahobas, located in the Central Plateau of Haiti, came to visit Father Dan Klem at his new twin parish, Sacred Heart (SH), in Norfolk. Fr. Bernard is a visionary for a new Haiti with good nutrition and education for children after elementary school, which is much needed. He said, *“When I open a school, I close a prison.”* After a generous landowner in Lascahobas donated a piece of land on which to build the middle school, Sacred Heart (SH) agreed to raise some of the funds to help Fr. Bernard build the SG School. This land is in a lush and quiet valley with beautiful mountains in the background. This is quite a contrast with the current facility used for instructions in the Parish Community Center, opposite to the SG rectory, on the busy main street, close to the local market.

Since Nov. 2009, thanks to Sacred Heart’s program, known as the Advent Giving Tree, which benefits both the Eastern Shore Migrant Ministry and the Haiti Twinning Ministry, truck and wheel barrow loads of cement, rebar, rocks, and gravel have been brought to the site of the new middle school. SH was responsible for providing 30% of the funds for the building of the school. St. Patrick School, Maury High School, and The Williams School (TWS) participated in this project through the One Million Pennies for Haiti project, the Post Earthquake Band Concert fund raiser, and TWS 2011 Annual Auction.

Groundbreaking started March 1, 2010, seven weeks after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince and its suburbs, when pilgrims from SH visited their twin parish. Fr Bernard said, *“When we build at a time of distress the Lord will bless our work.”* Since then the foundation was laid, the first and second concrete floors hand poured over a thick grid of rebar. In addition to paid professional workers, many parishioners and students gave a hand to this labor intensive community project. Parish ladies provided onsite coffee and lunches of rice and beans. Dedicated students broke rocks into small stones and bended rebar to the proper shape and dimension. One year after groundbreaking, they started building the classrooms on the second floor, while the first floor was used for storage.

The school has twelve classrooms, 1st-13th Grades, and an administrative space. The elementary school uses the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, and the middle and high school use the 2nd floor. Fr. Bernard also had a small school clinic built. He informally opened the school Oct. 2011 and invited Fr. Dan and a group of parishioners to the dedication of the school on March 1, 2013.

**What can we do?** If you feel a Call to Service and wish to donate some funds toward the furnishing of the classrooms, please write your check to Sacred Heart Church and add Building and Outfitting Fund on the memo line. For online giving go to [www.sacredheartnorfolk.org](http://www.sacredheartnorfolk.org), click on the "Giving" tab, then click "online giving.” Under “designate fund amount,” scroll down to Haiti: Building and Outfitting, and indicate the amount. **100% of your donation benefits St. Gabriel and is tax deductible.** Together we continue praying for our Family in Haiti.



**Before:** Fr. Bernard stands on the donated land, 3/10 **During:** Construction of the school **After:** St. Gabriel School

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<http://www.sacredheartnorfolk.org/ministries/justice-and-peace/haiti-ministry/>