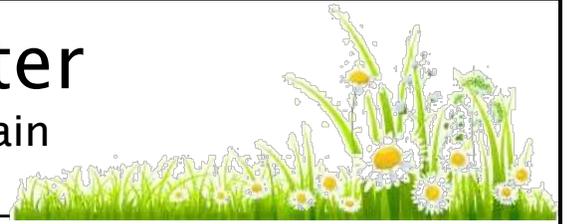




# HBS Newsletter

## Hôpital Bon Samaritain

Limbé, Haiti



Haiti, known as the “Pearl of the Antilles” reflecting its natural beauty, is a country rich in culture with a very colorful past. Foreign visitors and workers are often profoundly impacted, gaining greater insight and a deeper perception of life. Many times, we have heard from the older ex-patriate religious community, “*we came to Haiti to convert the people here, but in fact we were the ones converted*”. The story of Bartolomé de Las Casas “Protector of the Indians” is an early reminder of how great an effect this tiny island of Hispaniola and its people can have on those who experience it.

Bartolomé de Las Casas, a well-known friar of the Dominican Order, historian and lawyer was born in Seville, Spain in the late 1400’s. His father, Francisco de Las Cases first traveled to Hispaniola with Christopher Columbus on the second voyage in 1493. Studying law and excelling in Latin, Bartolomé de Las Casas joined the larger expedition of Nicolas de Ovando to Hispaniola in 1502. Governor of Hispaniola from 1502-1509, Nicolas de Ovando and his subordinates occupied Hispaniola and ruthlessly suppressed any rebellion of the native Indians. Ovando is credited with the institution of the “**Encomienda System**” which taxed native people forcing them into labor in exchange for protection and acceptance of religious teachings.

The arrival of the Europeans on Hispaniola was brutal on the native Taino Indians who were unable to defend themselves against harsh colonization and foreign diseases such as measles and small pox. The Taino population reduced rapidly from over 500,000 persons pre-Columbus to less than 60,000 in twenty years.

After witnessing the violence against the native population by the Spaniards, Bartolomé de Las Casas decided that he could no longer be involved in the exploitation of the natives. As part of the Ovando expedition, Bartolomé de Las Casas was afforded land and “Encomienda” which he divested himself of shortly after being ordained in 1514. Bartolomé de Las Casas became an outspoken critic of the Spanish conquests and their cruel treatment of the native indigenous people. He writes of the Taino Indians in his **Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies. (1542)** “*They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and on taking the sacraments of the Church and on observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness.*”

Bartolomé de Las Casas traveled back and forth to Spain many times and appealed to the King of Spain to defend the Indians and beg for better treatment. He convinced the authorities to save the remaining natives by placing them in free towns without slavery. He even initiated farm communities, where the free natives worked alongside the Spanish farmers but with little success. Bartolomé de Las Casas believed in the word of God and that God had led Spain to the New World. He believed that it was a test to see if his compatriots would be just and compassionate to serve God on this land rather than enslaving and torturing God’s people.

In 1547, Bartolomé de Las Casas returned to Spain and devoted the rest of his life to speaking and writing on the behalf of the Indians. He wrote the **Historia Apologética** which was an introduction to **Historia de las Indias** (History of the Indies) which was published after his death as per his request. Bartolomé de Las Casas passed away in July 1566 in Madrid.





### ***“Pish-Pish”***

In the North of Haiti, we are witnessing another outbreak of “pish-pish” the Creole name for conjunctivitis. As it is very contagious it has been spreading rapidly.

Once they have “pish-pish”, many people wear sunglasses to hide the redness and as the sunlight hurts their eyes. The Haitians believe there is male and a female version. The way they explain it, male version results in a furious red eye symptom, whereas the female version has only a mild eye irritation.

Conjunctivitis also known as “Pink Eye” is usually caused by a virus or bacteria. “Pink Eye” is the inflammation of the thin, clear tissue that lines the inside of the eyelid and the white part of the eyeball. It causes the blood vessels to be more noticeable.

The common symptoms of conjunctivitis are redness of the eye, itching, swollen, red eyelids, discharge and sometimes it feels like there is something in the eye. Bacterial “Pink Eye” is treated with antibiotics but does not work for the viral “Pink Eye” infection. “Pink Eye” rarely affects the vision.

Preventative measures require constantly washing your hands. Many of the staff at HBS fell victim of “Pink Eye” including many of the children in the Hodges House. Most persons recover within a week.

### ***Continuing improvements at HBS***



We have been steadily working on renovating all the buildings and residences replacing the roofs and ceilings. We are very pleased with all the improvements so far, though we still have a few buildings to go.

The current project is the renovation of the Maternity roof and ceiling. Due to termites, age and leaks, the roof, rafters and ceiling needed complete replacement. Working with several work teams and our local staff, we are making progress without too much disruption to Maternity services.

At the end of April, with the help of our friends from Sioux Falls, we replaced over 70 feet of trusses and roofing. The trusses were made in March with the help of Thomas Sperl from Ohio. A work team from Oregon will be coming the end of May, to finish the roof, reinstall the electrical, install and paint a new ceiling.

We would like to thank everyone who donated towards this project. The Maternity ward saw over 1200 patients for deliveries last year. We would like to raise additional funds to renovate the inside of Maternity.

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