



Catholic Social Teaching

TRAVELING LIGHT

Many years ago, Mrs. Malloy was part of a mission team that traveled to Port-au-Prince and Hinche, Haiti. She recently shared her experiences with our class.

“The purpose of the mission trip was not to build houses, care for the sick, or teach children. It was to be immersed into daily life as the people of Haiti experienced it.

“There are many sights, sounds, and experiences that remain with me to this day, but three stand out in my memory. The first was arriving in Port-au-Prince and going through customs. Several guards who were pointing guns at us greeted us. Our suitcases were gone through, and I remember that the guards were especially unkind to the oldest gentleman in the group. They tore through every item in his suitcase and kept him for questioning long after the rest of the group had been cleared.

“The second was the ride from Port-au-Prince to Hinche. We were crammed into the back of an old jeep, and bounced and bumped our way up and down several hills. About halfway to Hinche we stopped to visit a Catholic parish. It was an outdoor parish, meaning that there were no walls—only a thatched roof, a simple table for an altar, and tree stumps arranged as chairs to sit on. The pastor served us a feast of rice, goat, bread, and fresh fruit. We were invited to go first, aware that if we filled our plates with the meager amount of food being offered, our hosts would have nothing to eat.

“The trip home also stands out in my mind. When we were given our packing lists, we were told that we would be more comfortable in cotton clothes, old shoes were best, and women were expected to wear dresses or skirts. At the end of our trip, we were encouraged to leave our clothes behind for the parish clothes closet. And so I left behind everything but my purse, the clothes I was wearing, and my journal. It was a very different feeling to travel so lightly.

“That experience of traveling light impacts me to this day. How much food, how much money, how many clothes, and how many things do I really need in order to live? What can I give up, give away, or simply give so that others will have what they need?”



Preferential Option for the Poor

Christians put the needs of the poor first. We need to work to eliminate the sinful inequalities that exist among people. We are to share what we have in order to provide for the basic needs of all.