

Lessons From Haiti

Editorial

by Monsignor William J. Linder

Weeks after the Haitian earthquake, the images of death and destruction are still freshly etched in our minds. There is also something else that won't easily be forgotten—the weary faces of those pulled from underneath piles of rubble, days or even weeks after experts said a human being should be able to survive in those conditions. More than one survivor, when interviewed, pointed to their faith, a belief that God would somehow send someone to their rescue, as what really sustained them during those long, agonizing, hours spent in solitude and darkness. Others said they simply never gave up hope. How else could one explain an elderly woman in her 70s emerging singing after she was pulled alive from the rubble of Haiti's Roman Catholic cathedral a full week after the killer earthquake leveled the building?

Children were also among the survivors, including a five-year-old boy who was found alive by his uncle and pulled to safety, eight days after the quake struck. And on the 11th day when the rescue effort began to sadly shift to one of recovery, a 24-year-old man was amazingly found alive buried deep under the concrete and wood wreckage of the hotel grocery store where he worked. These events no doubt are not just miraculous, but also a tribute to the courage, resilience and fighting spirit of the Haitian people themselves. If one examines history, the only slave revolt ever to be fully successful in any kind of permanent way was the Haitian Revolution, which gave us the black-led independent republic we now call Haiti. The stories of these earthquake survivors amidst the great human tragedy in Haiti, which has left tens of thousands dead, also provides us with a simple lesson in two important things—faith and hope. They are what keep us going when life's circumstances prevent us from seeing our way clearly. They help us go on, when we really want to give up. Whether you are grappling with the loss of a job or another situation that seems simply insurmountable—burdened by worry and lack of a foreseeable escape route—stop to remember the Haitian earthquake survivors. Then cling to faith and hope.