In the shadow of death

Nuns bestow tender mercy on the dying

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti he open markets on the walk to Sanfeil are packed with people selling the daily needs - food, charcoal and one wood shop where craftsmen display their work: a chair, a table, a coffin.

The coffin is set out on the street so people can see its light, unfinished wood, its simple lines.
Through the crowded streets

people pass, hardly noticing. Women walk with five-gallon

containers of water balanced on their heads, stepping up and down steep slopes, around muddy holes and piles of garbage, never a close call, always in perfect rhythm with their load. Others balance baskets of produce and wash.

A man walks slowly down the edge of the street balancing on his head a child's coffin made of wood. He needs an arm to help him balance his

At the metal door to Sanfeil, a Haitian man sits on a stool and motions people inside. "You are most welcome here,"

he says.
Sanfeil means "place without son," as in son of God. It's run by a group of sisters under

It's a hospice for the dying.

There are many men and

dressed in white veils with blue stripes, won't say how many. Dressed in blue hospital

clothes, the patients walk in a courtyard if they can, or lie on beds in long rows inside the white building. Many have AIDS or tuberculosis. Many are young. Most look much older than

The scene is quite different at the front of the building, near the gate, around a 10-foot statue of the Virgin Mary. Here there is life.

Life and death

ing to a single door of a building at the front of the hospice.

Inside the door sits a sister Inside the door sits a sister from India, marking cards that people hand to her. The people then move forward across the room, past walls that are lined with 100-pound bags of pow-dered milk from the European Economic Community and Belgium. On another wall are bags of bulgur wheat from the United States. United States.

A man scooping powdered milk is wearing a mask, the rest of his black face and hands and arms and hair covered with the powder.

As women in line open plas-



An old man faces the day in a hospice bed, needing all his energy to reach out a hand before it falls back again. Many patients at the hospice for the dying have AIDS or tuberculosis.

them, he scoops out one, two two scoops of bulgur into a second sack that the women carry. A nun then hands the

women a jar of mustard.
"I do not want you to write about what you see here," the sister at the door tells a reporter. "Go out on the streets and look not important."

They're distributing food to

tic bags they've brought with 600 people this morning.

The people receiving food are the lucky ones. They're being fed. Even the people here who are dying are lucky. If they 441'm going back home. they'd die alone, hungry on

They'd be without the Son bring them.

Cries for love, help
This is only one of the hospices these sisters run in Port-

au-Prince.

Another is for malnourished children, some of them orphaned. Many will get better and be returned to their fam-ilies, who are being educated on

There are 104 babies in the children's hospital. They share 92 cribs - some babies two to a bed. The hospital is separated into rooms with 20 to 30 cribs in each room - white metal cribs with pastel colored sheets and

blue plastic pads. The children wear only loose, cloth diapers. There aren't enough people here to do the work. Some of the babies stretch their arms up at people who pass, begging to be held by any stranger whose your eyes, reaching as far as

hospices will still be here. The nuns will still be overworked. People will still be getting shot in Haiti and people still won't have enough food."



they can, sometimes crying. Josh Bussert of Lafayette was part of the group from St. Thomas Aquinas Church that visited Haiti in March. He went back often to help at the baby

"I have three kids," he says. "And every time I go to that place I see my kids in the faces of those infants and toddlers. It's so horrible to think that

will know." He wonders — what if these were his children? What if his children had been born in a country that didn't have the ability to provide the medical

this is the only life these kids

care they needed? en't for this hosnice " changed, they'd be in the gut-ters. They've got it great com-pared to what the children in the

seemed much longer for Bussert.
Sitting in a sleeping room
lit by a dim lantern on the

night before returning home, he says part of him will be happy to return to the United States. But a big part of him remains

"I'm going back home," he says. "But the Mother Teresa with too many kids. People will still be getting shot in Haiti and people still won't have enough food."

One stretcher still lies empty in a shed used as a morgue in a Port-au-Prince hospice.

THEHEALTH OFFICIAL

Scientist envisions better hygiene

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Helti en Kavanagh sits on the balcony of a build-ing overlooking this city and shakes his head.

There's so much to be done here, you hardly know where to start, he says.

But he does have some

ideas on where to begin. Kavanagh of Delphi is an

environmental scientist in sanitary engineering at the Indiana Department of Health. He visited Haiti last month

with a group from St. Thomas as Church in West Lafayette — partly to look at sanitation problems here and help find solutions.

"This is a huge problem.
You can see that," Kavanagh says, waving his hand across the view of Port-Au-Prince's

lums in front of him.

He's done a number of



problems as Port-au-

"But at least in an area like that, the problems are of a manageable size," he

Kavanagh

An endless cycle

Kavanagh stresses the of reconstructthe school there. They're in atrocious condition. And for many kids, school is the only place they get to use a privy. At home, they don't have Simple hygiene also is lack-

ing.
"It has to be emphasized to "It has to be emphasized to the point of being exaggerat-ed that nobody, nobody goes to the privy without washing their hands," he says. "They do have a water bucket there for washing but they don't have any soan."

ple concepts for individual

privies serving homes.

"Here in Port-Au-Prince, you almost have to scrap it down and start from scratch Kavanagh says. "You have all these impoverished areas where people are living on top of each other. You can't ernment being involved

"You can't have people living in sewage with no source of water. It's creating a cycle that's just endless."



With water scarce in Cité Soleil, people clean their feet in a puddle of rain water.

HAITI'S HISTORY

JULY 1992

agrees to reinstate Aristide as president, return The U.N. against Haiti.

JULY 3, 1993 Agreement is reached to reinstate Aristide granted amnesty.

AUG. 25, 1993 Businessman Robert Malval wins parliament's OK for

U.N. drops sanctions.

AUG. 30, 1993 Malval sworn in as prime minister.

Antoine Izmery is dragged from a church

OCT. 2, 1993 Human rights observers record the 100th assassination of

OCT. 6, 1993 Fwenty-six U.S. troop arrive, vanguard of a 1,600-member U.N. mission.

OCT. 10, 1993 Malval warns that if the U.N. plan fails, Haiti will collapse.

U.S. troops from

OCT. 14, 1993 Defense Minister Guy Malary is assassinated

OCT. 19, 1993 The U.N. embargo is reimposed after junta leaders fail to restore

DEC. 15, 1993 as prime minister

Aristide rejects a U.S. proposal that he make reassurance that the

FEB. 15, 1994
Aristide rejects a U.S.-backed plan to name a prime minister as a first step toward his return to power.

military leaders amnesty and set a date for Aristide to return.

MARCH 29, 1994

administration decides to extend a loophole in permitting some s to the U.S. until May 31.

Aristide cancels a 1981 U.S.-Haitian refugee agreement. charging the U.S. policy of repatriating The U.N. reports 112

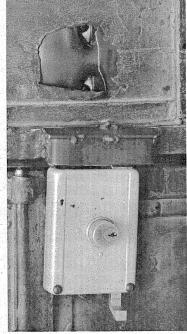














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THEDOCTOR

Births defy world of decay

r. Paul Blough doesn't know how to describe what he sees every day. He doesn't know how to describe how he feels about it.

He only knows that he feels a little worse every day he's in

When he first started volunteering his time here, Dr. Paul — as they call him — was asked how long he would stay. "Three months," he said.

That was 10 years ago. Now, he's trying to decide if it's time

the s an 80-year-old obste-trician-gynecologist who spends each day delivering babies in a hospital in one of the world's worst slums, a place where children play by open sewers, where the smells of urine and rotting garbage mix with fried bananas cooking on open grills. They deliver 10 to 15 babies

at the hospital. About half of the women go to a hos-pital for childbirth. The others stay home, preferring neighhorhood midwives.

close-cropped gray hair. He has a stereo in his room so he can listen to the music he loves and a TV set that plays video-

tapes from home.

But the electricity in this city is off most of the time and with his trip to Cité Soleil

"Cité Soleil is one of the places that the military picks on," he says. "The people there are almost 100 percent Aristide backers. There's always someone disappearing, someone being shot or beaten to death."

He's seen a lot of change in Haiti in the time he's been here changing governments, growing slums. Over time, Haiti's problems have worsened.

The ecology might be already beyond hope, he says. The mountains are being stripped of trees, which are us make charcoal for cooking. The burning charcoal and exhaust

from cars leave smog hanging over this Caribbean bay. "The infrastructure here is gone," Dr. Paul says. "You can't

££ I don't know how to explain how I feel. ... I don't know how these people can smile and say 'Good morning' do. They all do."



- Dr. Paul Blough, physician in Port-au-Prince

rely on anything. Everything needs to be done here. There isn't any kind of water system; there's no sewage system to speak of. There's no road sys-tem. There's no electrical system. Two or three times, money has been given to Haiti so it can fix its electrical system. But nothing was ever done and the situation has gotten worse and

worse. You have to start here **Beyond words**

from the bottom."

As you walk down the street, the people often look at you

They hold out their hands and ask for money with a look that says they know they'll get nothing. But they ask anyway. It's the way they live, not expecting much, but trying.

Sitting in his room, Dr. Paul is silent for long moments when asked to describe Haiti to peo-ple who haven't been here. He looks straight ahead, seeing in his thoughts the sights he pass-He finally turns his head

and speaks, slowly, quietly, with more disbelief than anger.

"It's really indescribable,

"I don't know. I don't know. It's just indescribable. When I go to work at 6:30 in the morning and as Γm going down the hill and get along the crest and I look down - the streets are just jammed with people, just jammed. You wonder where they're going and what they're doing all day. What do you say to people who haven't been here? Come and see?"

He's quiet again for a several

how I feel," he says. "And the longer I'm here, the worse I feel. I don't know how these people can smile and say 'Good morning' every day. But they all do. They all do."

Why does a doctor who could retire in great comfort come to live in a small, dark room in Haiti? Maybe he feels needed. When he first came here 10 years ago, his wife had died, he had retired, he was looking for mething to do.

He tells this story: Years earlier, he and anoth-

going to Tahiti after hearing medical help was needed there. But that doctor left for the East

to the Pacific island. "I just forgot about it all and then one day I said what the heck, I'll just go," he says. "I went by a tourist agency and went in, but I couldn't remember went in, but Touchart teniends where we were going to go. I knew there was the letter 'H' in it. The tourist agent and I decided it must be Haiti and we made the arrangements. When I got to my car, I remembered it was Tabiti But I. remembered it was Tahiti. But I was too embarrassed to go back

in and change everything. An undecided future

So he came to Haiti and walked through Cité Soleil to see what life was like there. He saw the hospital run by the Catholic Sisters of Charity and he stopped to visit. He offered to help.

"I went home to Peoria and got my things," he says. "I've been here ever since."

He feels accepted here. He isn't afraid walking on the

The worst the people will do

he says.
"They figure we've got more." than we need and they don't have enough," he says. "And they're right. We may not have all we want. But we sure have

all we want. But we sure have more than we need. Paul has six children and five grandchildren. At 80 years old, his time is getting shorter now. He's trying to decide if he should go back to Peoria and spend what years he has left with his family. He visits every year? But maybe now it's time

home to stay.

"I should go home," he says:
almost wistfully. "But I'd hate
to leave. I'd really hate to leave." You can learn a lot from these people. They can teach you how to live. They share. They don't have anything, but they

share.
"I love these people." So he spends the late days of his life helping bring new life into

THESISTERS

Love battles oppression

to help them help themselves."

Sister Ann Weller has a fine item clear voice that speaks with self-confidence, no nonsense.

When she's talking about Haiti, she talks about the people. She loves them.

The people here walk and they walk and they desperately try to find some tittle thing to self, when the some tittle thing to self, the some little thing to self, and behind us:

Other programs at the hospice copie with water, which is in short supply. It works to provide food for people with mainturition, it runs medical clinics, and it helps with rents.

We're trying to

for some, it has become
For people like that,
there are places such as
Hospice St. Joseph, run
by Sister Ann of Tipton,
Ind., and Sister Ellen Flynn of Connecticut.

The hospice receives financial help from the Lafayette Catholic Diocese, the Sisters of St. Joseph in Tipton and donations sent from all

and the United States. around the United States.

Once a guest house in this city, the hospice's building was in great disrepair when the church took it over in 1989. Today, it's been restored.

Located on a hill, it faces Port-au-

Located on a hill, it faces Port-auPrince's many slums, its surrounding mountains, its Caribbean Bay.

The three-story white building
with curved balcontles on the second
and third floors is surrounded by a
wall with a gate to let vehicles and people in and out. The courtyard is a
parking area surrounded by trees —
a bougainvillea with large pink flowcry leaves, a palm, several acacias,
a mango and a rubber tree. Below is
a swimming pool left from the days
before the church owned the property. It's empty now, and sits near the
cistern where guests come to get
their bathing water in five-gallon
plastic buckets.
You learn to bathe with only a
few cups of water in Halti because of
the water shortage. And you learn to
filter out the mosquito larvae from the
cistern water before you use it.

Shelter for victims.

Shelter for victims

Shelter for victims
The hospice serves many purposes.
"It opened to be, and it still is, a guest house for people who come here with serious intentions of being of assistance in Haiti," Sister Arm says. Groups come from many places in the United States, including a group from St. Thomas Aquinas Church in West Lafayette.

The hospice has sheltered human and 13: "Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the sellength of the more changers..." It is written, 'He says to them. My house from the roller of the more proposed in the called a house of prayer. "The tyou are making it a den of robbers."

The sisters would like to throw the robbers out of Haiti.

"We're trying to help them help themselves," Sister Ellen says. They're hard workers and they have pride in

hard for them to come and ask for assistance. We're trying to provide a situation where we can help them get

While the sisters talk, sitting on their While the sessers unc. suning on uca-balcony on a Saturday night, people in the neighborhood are milling about in the street below. They're mostly young people. 'They have nothing to do. It cam-not go on forever like this.' Sister Ann-says. It's totally self-defeating and

says. "It's totally self-deleating it's the military regime which is responsible for this.

responsible for this.

"They make money through drugs and armaments that are coming through. This is a drop-off point."

"Power and money is what the military is interested in," Sister Ellen says. They know how to get it and they don't want to share."

Af St. Joseph, in a quiet, small room lighted by candles, the sisters — who dress in shorts and blouses—

who dress in shortes and todouse-hold chaped on Sahurday nights. A pic-ture of Bishop William Higi of the Lafayette Diocese hangs on the wall. Sister Ann leads the group in song. And this Saturday night she asks a visitor to read from the Bible. She chooses Matthew 21, verses 12

THEMASS

In spirit and in truth

Sunday focuses minds on God

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti
he is about 18 years old and
at the bloom of her beauty.

Her head is tilted back, her face warmed and glistening in the heat of the sun as she sings at the outdoor church service, her eyes closed lightly so she sees

her eyes closed lightly so she sees only God.

"Padon Papa," she sings in Creole, asking forgiveness with several hundred other people gathered for the service: "padon," in a high-pitched, almost timp Caribba sound as tambou drums and tambourines fill their souls with a quick, repetitive beat.

Her head sways from side to side with the music. She's at peace.

side with the music. She's at peace. And perhaps it is that peace flow-ing from the face of God that min-utes later will hold her to a single flinch when a gunshot cracks the

A day of rest

It's a March Sunday in the cap-ital city of Haiti, where 80 percent of the population is Catholic. The of the population is Catholic. The streets are filled with people walking to services, Bibles in their hands held against bright, clean clothes — their Sunday best.

Women have squeezed feet heavily calloused from walking barefoot

into open-toed, strappy, high-heeled shoes — feet that look strangely out of place in such confines, like oak trees in a field of flowers.

The dust and dirt rise in puffs from the eroded, hole-filled road

as people walk past simple con-crete block homes where whole They walk past vacant lots next

to homes where garbage has sat stinking for weeks, abandoned for white goats to pick through, brown pigs to snort through and an occasional man to shuffle through with his feet looking for anything he



The eyes of Haiti focus on a Sunday morning Mass where children in spotless, colorful dresses pray for a better future.

On Sunday morning they go to praise God for their blessings. The Spiritais Provincial House is a grass-roots community in a is a grass-roots community in a poor area of the impoverished city where people are trying to improve their life. Some of the people who gather here for Sunday Mass have polit-

ical leanings away from the military junta that rules the country with shootings and beatings and thefts in the night.

A priest in white robe and pur-

A pires in wine to be and up ple stole has come to say this Sunday morning Mass. It's held in the courtyard of the community center, where acacia trees grow surrounded by a 10-foot-high concrete block wall with broken, green-less bettle embedded in partial control of the control of the control of the production of the control of the control of the production of the control of th glass bottles embedded in mortar

at the top — the sharp, jagged edges pointing to the blue sky. Above the chairs and benches where people sit squeezed together is a small canopy to shield them somewhat from the sun — a canopy made of white 100-pound food bags stretched open and sewn together.
"Mr Ruby's #1 Extra Fancy Enriched
Rice" some read, and others: "Blue Ribbon long grain rice."

Violence and prayer

The people, sometimes three thair, sit quietly as the priest tal The music excites them — the sounds from the long, slender tambou drums. The choir that sits at the

front moves their heads and souls.
A gentle breeze blows dried leaves
on the food bag canopy, and roosters crow in the distance in unseen places at the moment when the

congregation jumps with the pop of a gun outside the walls. It wasn't long ago — just October, near the time when exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was supposed to return here - that rumors filled this neighborhood.

Police agents, called attaché, or some other armed political group opposed to Aristide, planned to come to the service one Sunda to interrupt it, the street talk

What that meant was anyone's guess, says Sister Ellen Flynn of Connecticut, who works in the city and attends these services. They might just come and shout and make noise and send the people run-ning. Or they might kill them, they

might kill them all. So, that Sunday when the "inter-So, that Sunday when the "inter-ruption" was expected, the people kept their many children at home but went to Mass themselves to show determination to pray and wor-ship in the face of fear. Nothing

happened.
That was months ago. But it

A simple crucifix and altar transform the courtyard into a church this Sunday in March. The ser-

vice is in Creole but guests who don't speak the language know what is being said. You can understand the familiar words and phrases through the rhythm and the pauses of the service.

"Papa, nou yo ki nan siela," the people pray in almost monotone uni-son, lead by the priest. "Se pou yo respekte non ou." They all pause Se pau vo rekonet, Se ou ki roi

..." They pause again.
"... On earth as it is in heaven." English-speaking people

Influenced from the inside

Sister Ellen is sitting near the front when the gunshot goes off and her eyes close, holding the moment, waiting to hear a second and a third and see armed men pouring

over the gates and walls.

But nothing more comes — just the gentle voice of the priest and the sweet sound of Mass and the kiss of the gentle breeze that rattles

It's just another gunshot in Haiti "Padon Papa," the people sing in the hot morning air, asking for giveness for their sins. "Padon," sings the 18-year-old girl, her face lifted up toward God, the words to c written so clearly in he soul that she doesn't need a hyn