

Nigerian Well Project Report

Brother Knights: I am including here a report from Bernie Hartlin, President of the Holy Redeemer Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) Conference, about the special collection and project in 2017 to build a well in

Nigeria. This report is of interest to the parish and our Council, as Knights contributed to this collection, both as individuals and as a Council. My thanks to Bernie for reporting on this project for our benefit.

Holy Redeemer SSVP Nigerian Well Project report by Bernie Hartlin, SSVP

Father Paul asked me, Bernie Hartlin, President of Holy Redeemer Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Conference, to do a report about the Special SSVP Nigerian Well Project, to be inserted in the Knights of Columbus Council 9544 Knight-Lite newsletter.

In 2017, at a Christmas reception at the rectory held by our newly-appointed pastor, Father Paul, and while in conversation I found out that Fr would be travelling to his home town in Nigeria for one month. While there he would be spending his vacation (and his own money) to help his community build a much needed well in their town. Up until now, people were having to walk two hours to fetch water, and then another two hours just to return home. With this information, at our next SSVP Holy Redeemer conference meeting, members decided to request that a special collection be taken up to support the building of a well.

We approached newly-appointed Fr Rick Lorenz, the associate pastor, for approval soon after Father Paul left for Nigeria and he agreed with our proposal. The special collection would have to take place immediately, that same weekend, as it was the only weekend that a special collection was not already taking place. With Fr Rick's go-ahead, I immediately put in place a pulpit and a bulletin announcement. We told the congregation that we wanted to surprise Father Paul upon his return and we asked them to keep this endeavour a secret from him.

After the announcements were made, and to our amazement, the generosity of the parishioners took us all by surprise. On the first weekend, we collected over two thousand dollars; by the end of the second weekend, the sum surpassed four thousand dollars. And by the time Father Paul returned in February, over ten thousand dollars had been received!

It was decided to have our conference members present Fr Paul with a big mock check at his first 11am after his return. I was scheduled to make an announcement. Before Mass, Fr Paul asked what the announcement would be about. So as not to ruin the surprise, I

told him the announcement would be about a collection for the sandwich makers.

At the end of Mass, I was called up to make the announcement. I started by asking Fr Paul to join me as we had a special presentation to make. (I had to ask him several times before he realized that I wanted him to come forward for the presentation.) As he was making his way toward the lectern, I began explaining how the collection for the well project came about. I was thanking the parishioners for their generosity. The total amount to present to Fr Paul was over TEN THOUSAND dollars! I asked the executive members of the SSVP conference to join me in presenting Fr Paul with a mock cheque, measuring 4ft by 2ft.

Fr Paul was overwhelmed! I told him how parishioners had rallied and given money while he was away, so that the community well in Nigeria could be completed. Fr Paul was at a loss for words ... After a short time, he began to thank parishioners and describe how he himself used to carry the jugs of water at the age of ten and walk the two hours each way in order to provide water for his family. He went on to say how the well would assist his home community, because of this collection, they would now be able to complete the badly needed well and have running water. In Canada we just turn on a tap, but this is not the case in Nigeria.

The well has since been completed and it is now fully functioning. The well project required a digging and drilling rig, electrical work, the erection of a water tower, and the installation of a pump. Fr Paul made his annual trip home again this January and upon his return from Nigeria this year, he presented us with a number of pictures of the building process of the new well, its completion and how towns people are now



drawing the water from the local well and transporting the water jugs in various ways.

The Holy Redeemer SSVP committee was very happy to be involved in helping Fr Paul's home town build a

well so that they could have easy access to water. We are most appreciative of the very generous response from the parishioners of Holy Redeemer Parish that brought this project to completion.

