

## **Know Your Los Toros Brothers and Sisters Part 1**

If you have been around St. Joseph Parish for any length of time, you have heard that our mission in Los Toros is a partnership of collaboration and solidarity. This is a relationship of mutual trust and respect that grows over time. As we get to know each other, we come to appreciate how very different our daily lives are, but also how our shared gospel values bring us together even with different histories. Catholic Relief Services' U.S. Operations Partnership Manual expresses our experience: "... parish twinning relationships are an invitation to a whole different kind of relationship, whereby people from opposite sides of this historic divide, come together, get to know one another more fully as human persons, the joys as well as the struggles, the gifts as well as the needs. People on each side are seen as multi-dimensional and partners are very curious and appreciate... things that shape the other—their history (personal, community, and national), their culture, their family life, their faith and the varied cultural expressions of their faith."

It was believed that all the indigenous people died out after the Spanish conquest (and the massacres, poverty and diseases that followed), but recent research shows that a good number are still there, many of mixed ancestry. Bartholomew Columbus, Christopher's brother, became the first Spanish governor of the island and founded the city of Santo Domingo in 1496. It was a center for exportation of gold to Spain until the conquest of Mexico when Mexico City became the new center of the Spanish colonies. The shipment of African slaves to Santo Domingo began in 1510. This is the third element in the basic mix of Dominican heritage.

## Know Your Los Toros Brothers and Sisters Part 2

*Our first article of this series (November 27 bulletin) covered the indigenous peoples living on the Island when **Christopher Columbus arrived through the start of the slave trade. This second article continues with the Colonial Era.*** As peaceful as the Indigenous peoples were, things did not go well during the colonization by the Spanish army. Early in the 1500's, one of the Taíno leaders, Hatuey, fled to Cuba and organized armed resistance against the Spanish invaders. He was captured and burned alive. A priest attempted to convert him to Christianity so that Hatuey could go to heaven. Hatuey asked if there were Spaniards in heaven. When the priest answered, "Yes," Hatuey refused.

The gold deposits of Hispaniola were running out when Hernándo Cortés conquered Mexico. Most of the Spanish colonists then left the island for the silver discovered in Mexico and Hispaniola's importance diminished. Only a few thousand "Spanish" settlers remained, many being the descendants of Spanish fathers and Taíno mothers. They then raised livestock to supply Spanish ships that stopped on their way to richer colonies on the American mainland.

By the mid 1600's, the island was plagued by pirates, based on the Island of Tortuga. They not only raided passing Spanish treasure ships, but also stole livestock from Hispaniola.

The French sent colonists to Tortuga and the northwestern coast of Hispaniola, which the Spaniards had abandoned. In 1697, the western third of Hispaniola became a French possession. Hundreds of thousands of African slaves were brought and forced to work on the sugar plantations. This became one of the wealthiest colonies in the world. The next 200 years were marked by slave uprisings and struggles for freedom.

The most successful resistance against the Spaniards took place on Hispaniola from 1519 to 1534 when several thousand Taínos escaped captivity and followed their leader Enriquillo to the mountains of Bahoruco,

in the south-central part of the island. This is southwest of where the village of Los Toros is today.

The very first truce between an Amer-Indian chief and a European monarch was negotiated there giving Enriquillo and his followers their own town and charter.