



Homily Ideas for August 26-27

One year ago, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States, causing devastating damage in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Diocese of Biloxi. Many buildings, including churches, schools, rectories, and parish centers, suffered severe damage or were destroyed.

In the Diocese of Biloxi, 428 of 433 church-owned properties were destroyed or seriously damaged. Biloxi reports \$70 million worth of damage to buildings, but only half of that amount is covered by insurance. New Orleans reports \$52 million estimated uninsured flood damage for buildings the Archdiocese is trying to reopen right now, and another \$70 million for buildings whose reopening has had to be delayed.

This Sunday, the diocese and eparchies of the United States will take up a national collection to help rebuild the Church in these dioceses. Rebuilding the Church means rebuilding hope. As parishes and schools reopen, people return to these areas, beginning to believe that their communities will survive.

The Church can be a harbor of safety and hope in places where some people have had to move many times, attempting to

re-establish their families and their livelihood. Reopened schools and churches minister to the needs of these people and make real the words of today's psalm:

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed
in spirit he saves.*

By caring for our brothers and sisters, we remind them and ourselves that we are one in the Body of Christ. When part of the Body suffers, all suffer.

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the Twelve a challenging question: Do you also want to leave? Peter answers for the apostles, choosing to follow Jesus, recognizing that he will lead them to everlasting life.

We face a hard choice as well. There are many claims on our financial resources. There never seems to be enough money to do all that we desire. A decision to give generously to assist the Church in New Orleans and Biloxi will require commitment and sacrifice. Discipleship always does. We must decide to stand with our brothers and sisters, making sure that the Church in the devastated region can remain a powerful sign of hope for all God's children.