



Hurricane Recovery Task Force

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A Collection for New Orleans and Biloxi
August 26-27, 2006

July 20, 2006

Dear Reverend Father,

On behalf of the Bishops' Hurricane Recovery Task Force, I am writing to ask for your personal assistance in promoting and participating in the upcoming national collection on **August 26-27** to aid in the recovery efforts of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and the Diocese of Biloxi. These two dioceses, so devastated by the ravages of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, are still in a state of unimaginable need. The theme of the national collection is inspired by Bishop Thomas Rodi of Biloxi, who proclaimed to the bishops of the United States that to "rebuild the Church is to rebuild hope itself." Let me share just some of the statistics involved, which I hope you will share with your parishioners.

- In the Diocese of Biloxi, 428 of 433 church-owned properties were destroyed or seriously damaged.
- In the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 200,000 homes were lost, including the rectories of priests and the homes of deacons who were attempting to minister to others while they themselves were losing everything.
- In New Orleans, 60% of the population has not returned; 80% of the population in hard-hit St. Bernard's civil parish has not returned; almost no one has returned to Lower Plaquemines.
- In some regions, people have had to move an average of three times, some as many as nine times, in attempting to re-establish their families and their livelihood.
- Diocese of Biloxi reports \$70,000,000 worth of damage to buildings, but only half of that amount is covered by insurance. New Orleans reports \$52,000,000 estimated uninsured flood damage for buildings the Archdiocese is trying to reopen right now, and another \$70,000,000 for buildings whose reopening has had to be delayed.
- Rebuilding the Church and her structures is critically important now, as many civil jurisdictions declare that they are no longer able to house and care for persons displaced by the 2005 hurricanes, and will be unable to do so in the future.

One year after the devastation of Katrina, this new collection is needed simply because last year's collection focused on immediate humanitarian relief, and only scratched the surface of the needs involved. This collection focuses on rebuilding churches, schools, and other essential parts of the parishes' infrastructure which are needed to rebuild people's hope. If there is a subtext to this collection, it is that—as the figures above illustrate—immense help is needed for the recovery of the area now more than ever.

Thank you, Father, for your own commitment to this effort and for the gracious generosity of the people of the parish. May God continue to bless all of you abundantly!

Fraternally in Christ,

Most Rev. Joseph A. Fiorenza
Chair, Bishops' Hurricane Recovery Task Force