Washington: Catholic Dioceses Give More Than $58.7 Million for Relief

Contributions in Wake of 2017 Hurricanes and Mexico Earthquakes

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In response to the destruction caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and earthquakes in Mexico, Catholics across the United States have contributed nearly $59 million to relief and recovery efforts, it was reported May 21, 20176.

Initiated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), special collections and funds were launched last year to support humanitarian relief efforts as well as to provide pastoral services and financial support to rebuild facilities in dioceses impacted by these disasters.

“The devastation wrought by last year’s unprecedented disasters continues to impact the lives of our brothers and sisters in the United States, across the Caribbean, and in Mexico. We are profoundly grateful to the dioceses that took up special collections or made donations,” said Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi, chairman of the USCCB Committee on National Collections “The support of parishioners is an act of charity and a reflection of love for neighbor. We ask for continued prayers of support for the people affected by these historic natural disasters.”

As of mid-May 2018, US dioceses have remitted the following amounts for relief efforts:

**Hurricane Harvey** – $37.2 Million

**Hurricane Irma** – $12.8 Million

**Hurricane Maria** – $6.1 Million

**Mexico Earthquakes** – $3.5 Million

Humanitarian relief and recovery efforts are being provided by Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CCUSA is receiving 50% of Hurricane Harvey funds and 30% of both Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria funds; CRS is receiving 20% of Hurricane Irma funds. Initial funding from the special collections supported immediate needs such as food, clean water, hygiene products, and shelter. Long-term disaster recovery is currently underway. CCUSA recently distributed $13.5 million to nine Catholic Charities agencies in Texas and Louisiana where Hurricane Harvey affected countless people.

In response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, CRS worked with Caritas Havana in Cuba to provide roofing and mattresses to affected families. In the British Virgin Islands, CRS, Caritas Antilles, and the British Red Cross set up a joint cash program to help 740 families buy essential items. In Dominica, CRS and Caritas Antilles distributed 750 hygiene kits, 1,590 tarps, 920 buckets and 660 water filters to more than 600 families in four communities in the hardest-hit southeastern region. In the Dominican Republic, CRS partners provided 1,970 families with vouchers for food, hygiene and living supplies, and 330 families with hygiene kits. Teams also worked with the local health ministry to raise awareness about health and hygiene, particularly the danger of waterborne diseases and other health risks.

Two Mexico earthquakes days apart killed nearly 500 people in September 2017 and destroyed homes, infrastructure and utilities, CRS, Caritas Mexico and local partners constructed transitional shelters and distributed 2,859 tarps to vulnerable families. They set up communal cooking facilities to ensure daily hot meals and provided living supplies, including kitchen sets and locally made clay ovens. CRS and its partners also arranged counseling for 1,040 children and young people dealing with grief, distress, and trauma from the earthquakes. Moving forward, CRS will train people to build back better using disaster-resilient construction techniques and to maintain their shelters. In four communities, community-based disaster response teams are being trained in first aid. This outreach was done through CRS’s direct fundraising efforts.

The USCCB Subcommittee on Catholic Home Missions is managing the US Church share of Hurricane Harvey (50%), Hurricane Irma (30%) and Hurricane Maria (55%) funds. The Subcommittee has awarded $14 million in Hurricane Harvey grants and $3 million in Hurricane Irma grants to assist with Church repairs to parishes and schools in dioceses impacted by the hurricanes. Requests from dioceses for Hurricane Maria support will be considered at the Subcommittee’s June 14 meeting.

The USCCB Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America is managing the Caribbean Church share of Hurricane Irma (20%) and Hurricane Maria (15%) funds, as well as all contributions to the Mexico Earthquakes fund.

Distributions to the responding organizations will continue to be made as funds are received.