



Office of the President

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Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles
President

September 3, 2020

Your Eminence/Excellency:

The traditional storm season has only just begun and already we have witnessed the devastating impact of Hurricane Laura and the California wildfires. Thousands of homes, businesses, and churches have been severely damaged or destroyed, and the impacts will be long-lasting. Please find attached a letter to all bishops from Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, by which the Bishop conveys the dire nature of the situation in the aftermath of the hurricane.

We offer our prayers to families who have lost loved ones, homes, and businesses. Archbishop Etienne, the Chairman of our Committee on National Collections, has been in touch with several bishops to learn about their situations and to offer our prayers and our desire to be of assistance in this time of need.

It is reasonable to expect an increasing number of natural disasters. As we often do in these situations, I suggest we take up a voluntary special collection for the humanitarian, long-term recovery, and Church needs arising from these calamities. I ask that we make a special appeal to support the USCCB Bishops Emergency Disaster Fund and that we each take up the collection as soon as possible so that those most in need can receive assistance quickly. The annual collection for The Catholic University of America is scheduled in many dioceses the first or second weekend in September, and so I recommend that the special collection be taken up on the nearest weekend that does not conflict with any local CUA appeal.

The funds collected in this special appeal will become part of the Bishops Emergency Disaster Fund and will be used to support the efforts of Catholic Charities USA and/or Catholic Relief Services, the official relief agencies of the U.S. Catholic Church, as they and their local agencies respond to immediate emergency needs for such necessities as water, food, shelter, and medical care, and aid in long-term rebuilding and recovery efforts; and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for pastoral and reconstruction needs of the Church. Funds will be used in response to Hurricane Laura and any other disasters that occur and will be distributed where they are most needed. However, if such purpose(s) become unnecessary, impractical or impossible to fill, USCCB may use such contributions for other emergency disaster relief where it is most needed as determined by the Committee on National Collections using its emergency response protocol.

I recognize that parish and diocesan activities have been impacted severely by COVID-19 and that the local capacity for fund-raising this year may be more challenging than with past emergency collections. However, I know the generosity of our people and their deep care for those in need. I trust that you will find the best way of making these needs known to your people and I have confidence in their prayerful consideration and response.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

+ José H. Gomez

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President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops