

Catholic Charities proffers hurricane relief aid

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Catholic Charities USA has set aside an initial \$25,000 for disaster relief in the U.S. Virgin Islands, where Hurricane Marilyn killed at least eight people and destroyed or damaged thousands of homes and businesses Sept. 16.

In Massachusetts, Bishop Sean O'Malley of Fall River—who was bishop of the Virgin Islands from 1985-92—asked pastors to take up a special collection in all parishes to help the hurricane victims.

He told reporters at an impromptu news conference Sept. 18 that the immediate concern was essentials like food and pure water, but Catholic institutions there will be responding for years to needs created by the storm.

After Hurricane Hugo in 1989, he said, Catholic schools were still using tents for classrooms two years later and Catholic social agencies were helping those whose livelihood was destroyed by the storm.

The island of St. Thomas, which bore the brunt of the storm with winds gusting up to 130 miles an hour, lost electrical, water and phone service. More than three-fourths of the island's homes were reported destroyed or damaged. At least six people were killed.

St. Croix, about 35 miles to the south, received a more glancing blow from Marilyn, but the storm left at least two dead. St. Croix—where 90 percent of the buildings were destroyed six years ago in Hurricane Hugo—also lost water, electrical and long-distance phone service, but damage to homes and businesses was reportedly far less extensive than in St. Thomas.

The third large island, St. John, which has about 3,500 inhabitants, was also reportedly without water, electricity or phone service. Early reports indicated

about one-fifth of the homes on St. John were damaged.

Nearly 30 percent of the U.S. Virgin Islands' 100,000 people are Catholic.

Jane Gallagher, Catholic Charities USA director of disaster response, said U.S. Catholics gave some \$2 million through Catholic Charities to help victims of Hurricane Hugo in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and North Carolina in 1989. Initial reports indicated that the damage to St. Thomas from Hurricane Marilyn was as bad as or worse than what

St. Croix suffered from Hugo.

She said she met Sept. 18 with Barbara Gilliard-Payne, director of Catholic Social Services for the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, who was visiting a sister in Northern Virginia when the hurricane hit.

"Barbara has talked with her daughter (on St. Thomas), who has a cellular phone," Gallagher said. "Her daughter told her, 'Whatever pictures you see in the papers or on TV, it's much worse than that. It's worse than anything you've seen.'"

Bishop O'Malley told journalists that when he was in the Virgin Islands after Hugo, many people survived on peanut butter and cold beans. They had no electric power to heat the beans or to bake bread to go with the peanut butter.

He said the islands depend on rain for drinking water, but a severe storm makes the water supplies unsanitary.

Because the islands depend so heavily on tourism for their economic base, the destruction of hotels and resorts brings long-term loss of the means of livelihood for many residents, he said.

Bishop O'Malley said there was a rash of suicides in the Virgin Islands about eight months after Hugo hit—a phenomenon psychologists attributed to a loss of hope among people who had lost not only their homes but their jobs.

Gallagher said that after immediate emergency needs are met, Catholic Charities USA will work with local Catholic institutions to "help formulate plans for long-term recovery" to assure that those most in need are assisted and that the church-run projects do not duplicate those of other efforts.

EDITORS' NOTE: Donations may be sent to: Hurricane Marilyn, Disaster Response Office, Catholic Charities USA, 1731 King St., Alexandria, Va. 22314.



Reuters/CNS

PONTIFF BLESSES KENYANS—Dressed in a traditional Masai chief's robe given to him by the Kenyan people, Pope John Paul II blesses a crowd of some 250,000 gathered for Mass in Nairobi Sept. 19.

Late bishop remembered as foe of apartheid

NEW YORK (CNS) — Auxiliary Bishop Emerson J. Moore of New York, who had been an outspoken opponent of South African apartheid, died Sept. 14 at age 57 after a lengthy illness.

A funeral Mass was to be celebrated by New York's Cardinal John J. O'Connor Sept. 19 at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The bishop's physician listed the cause of death as unknown natural causes.

When he was appointed bishop in September 1982, Bishop Moore became the sixth black Catholic bishop in the nation and the first black Catholic bishop of the New York Archdiocese. His death leaves 11 active black Catholic bishops in the U.S.

"Bishop Moore's death constitutes a great loss for all the people of the Archdiocese of New York, for the African-American community throughout the United States, and is a cause of deep personal sorrow to me," said Cardinal O'Connor in a statement Sept. 15.

In 1984, Bishop Moore was the first U.S. bishop arrested for civil disobedience after illegally blocking the entrance to the South African consulate in New York in protest against apartheid, the national policy of racial segregation and white minority rule that came to an end in 1994.

In an interview after his arrest, the bishop said there was a "logical progression" from his statements on apartheid to his arrest, noting, "It's a topic about which I feel very strongly. There has to be a witness of the church in this area."

Father William Lewers, then head of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Office of International Justice and Peace, praised the bishop's willingness to "lay himself on the line" against apartheid.

"When a bishop of the church feels so strongly in conscience about a matter that he engages in civil disobedience, then the members of the church should seriously reflect on that issue and what their own response might be," he said in

an interview.

Bishop Moore, who grew up in the South Bronx, was born in Harlem on May 16, 1938. When he was 17, he converted to Catholicism. Three years later, he entered the seminary.

He was ordained a priest May 30, 1964, and named a monsignor in 1978, becoming the only black priest in the United States at the time with the title.

In 1975, then-Father Moore was named pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Harlem, where he personally welcomed the pope during his 1979 visit to the United States and where he served as pastor until his death.

Bishop Moore, who had master's degrees in social work and public administration, served as chairman of the Africa Committee for Catholic Relief Services.

In his statement, Cardinal O'Connor said that Bishop Moore was proud of being black, but that his "attitudes transcended all racial differences."



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