



Floods destroy Tabasco parishes

Floods and subsequent mudslides, triggered by early October rains from tropical depressions and Tropical Storm Irene, have taken more than 369 lives and left tens of thousands homeless in Mexico.

Badly damaged was the Diocese of Tabasco, which for years has had a sister relationship with the Diocese of Rochester.

"I just got off phone with Father Saul Solis Vera, pastor of the (Villahermosa) cathedral," Father Paul J. Ryan reported Oct. 26. As part of the sister-diocese relationship, Father Ryan worked in Tabasco with lay volunteers from the Rochester Diocese from 1985-1990, when Father Vero was a seminarian.

Father Ryan said some 200 communities — many with 10-20 churches each — were under water, he said, including a church he and his team had founded.

"Four communities our teams were at

no longer exist," the priest said, explaining that residents of those communities had been evacuated safely.

Father Ryan, currently pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, Hamlin, visited Tabasco last January.

"Many parishioners and diocesan staff have already inquired as to ways to assist our brothers and sisters in this time of crisis," noted Judy Taylor, diocesan liaison to Catholic Relief Services.

Taylor said that donations, marked "Mexico," may be sent to: Catholic Relief Services, 209 W. Fayette St., Baltimore, MD 21201-3443.

"If they are not still reeling, the rebuilding is going to be long-term," Taylor said.

According to Kenneth Hackett, executive director of CRS, "the affected areas along Mexico's Gulf Coast were already among the poorer regions of the country.

Families lost everything in a matter of moments."

Catholic Relief Services operates programs in Mexico with its local Caritas partners. This relationship will allow the assistance to be immediately channeled to appropriate locations. The funds will be used to provide emergency relief supplies, such as plastic sheeting for shelter, five-gallon containers, family hygiene articles, and medicine, Hackett said.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish sent about \$3,400 for medicine and assistance several months ago, before the flooding, Father Ryan said. A parishioner recently donated \$3,000, which will go toward rebuilding an educational facility in one of the Mexican parishes.

Father Jesus Flores, interim director of the diocese's Spanish Apostolate, is a native of Hermosillo in the Tabasco Diocese.

Reuters/CNS
A woman hangs up clothes as she stands amid flood waters in Tabasco's southern city of Villahermosa in Mexico Oct. 24, where rain still falls.



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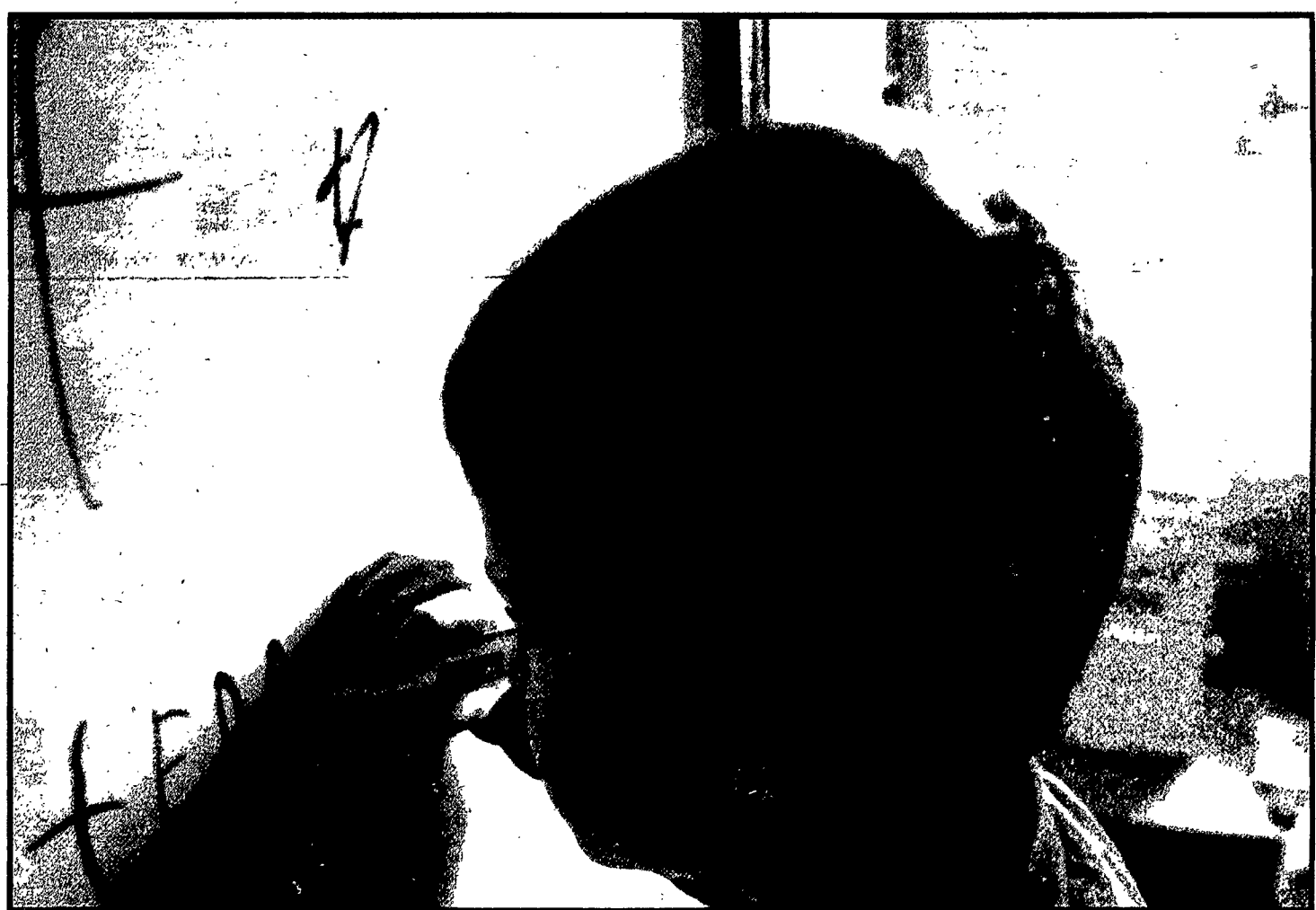


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David Condon practices spelling with his brother Josh at the computer Oct. 25. Both children are taught in their Henrietta home by their mother Janet Condon.

Home is where the classroom is

Kathy Brennan had had enough of being told her children were not allowed to pray in public school.

"(School officials) called it 'the real world,' and said that prayer had no place there. We didn't like that," said Brennan, a parishioner at Church of the Assumption in Fairport.

Brennan looked into Catholic schools in eastern Monroe County, only to find that most had a waiting list.

So beginning in 1996, Brennan and her husband, Dan, decided that their children would be home-schooled. Kathy teaches four of their five children while also tending to their 2-year-old.

Meanwhile, Deacon Michael McGuire,

who serves at six churches in the Finger Lakes area, had sent his two sons to St. Mary's School in Canandaigua for several years. When the boys reached high-school age, Deacon McGuire's wife, Cathy, began home-schooling them.

Deacon McGuire explained that his family's home — in Bristol, Ontario County — is too far from any Catholic high school. The deacon also voiced concern over drugs and other negative influences in the public schools, based on his experience as a county probation officer.

As the Brennans and McGuires illustrate, families turn to home schooling for a variety of reasons. Some are practical, such as geographic isolation or high tu-

ition costs at private schools. In addition, parents also wish to spend quality time with their children while shielding them from a corrupt societal environment.

Prayer and traditional religious education are strong staples of many Catholic home-schooling families. Consider some of the ideals set forth by T.O.R.C.H. (Traditions of Roman Catholic Homes), a Maryland-based network of more than 100 home-schooling chapters in the United States and Canada.

According to T.O.R.C.H. Co-director Inchi Sugarman, the nonprofit organization strives to teach the traditions and history of the church; provide Catholic play-

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Story by Mike Latona • Photos by Mike Mergen