



## ***United States Conference of Catholic Bishops***

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March 25, 2010  
Feast of the Annunciation  
Year of the Priest

Dear Brother Bishops,

It has been just over two months now since the terrible earthquake left most of Port au Prince and some surrounding towns in ruins, millions displaced and distressed and over 250,000 dead. The people of Haiti mourn and we mourn with them.

As the Chairman of the Board of CRS and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America we would like to offer a brief update on what has transpired in what is being envisioned as a unified response from our Church entities in the United States to the Church and suffering people in Haiti.

Catholic Relief Services, working closely with Caritas Haiti and many religious, parish groups, international organizations, is continuing to provide food, temporary shelter, hygiene kits, water and sanitation services for tens of thousands at parishes and other sites throughout the city and in the Southern towns of Jacmel and Petite Goave. It has also reestablished medical care out of St. Francois de Sales hospital which was all but physically destroyed. Prior to the quake St. Francis de Sales along with two other hospitals, St Damien and Sacre Coeur, were linked with Notre Dame University of Haiti Medical School in a program supported by CRS to build capacity of the Catholic Health Service in Haiti. This program is being revived and facilities will be rebuilt.

The Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America has been active in assisting Haiti also. Immediately funds were provided to re-establish the Catholic radio station in Port-au-Prince. Also, a Haiti Advisory Group was established to focus attention on both the near and long term needs to rebuild ecclesial structures and programs in Haiti. Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop Gomez, Bishop Wenski and Bishop Sansaricq have agreed to serve as members of this advisory group to study this task and to make recommendations on funding priorities to the Subcommittee. Members of that group visited Haiti during the week of March 8 and had conversations both with the Bishops of Haiti and the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Bernardito Auza. That visit has laid the groundwork for an extensive assessment of the damages to the Church in Haiti that will allow the USCCB to collaborate effectively with CRS and all those who are coming to the aid of the Church in Haiti as it responds to the earthquake. An assessment team involving technical experts representing the Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America and CRS will visit Haiti during the first week in April. In addition, the USCCB has reached out to other major Church aid organizations so that reconstruction efforts and re-establishing pastoral programs will be coordinated as much as possible.

USCCB and CRS are also trying to support the efforts and requests of literally hundreds of U.S. parish, universities and dioceses for information and financial and logistic support for their relationships in Haiti. Recently, the Subcommittee on Latin America sent out a questionnaire to all dioceses seeking information on existing ties between the Church in the United States and the Church in Haiti. This information will be useful in ensuring collaboration and the most efficient use of funds.

Another result of the earthquake is that virtually all major towns in the country have received an influx of people from Port-au-Prince and this has stressed the capacities of welcoming families and institutions. One of the immediate consequences of this influx has been significant added stress to existing Church structures.

What we both witnessed during our successive visits was the enormous toll the quake has taken on the Church, her people, her priests and religious, and her structures. One of the key challenges will be to provide temporary shelter for the priests, the seminarians and some of the religious who have nowhere to live. This will at least allow them to have a semi-functioning base from which to carry out their ministries. We are facilitating the purchase of tents so that the seminarians can start studying again.

Of serious concern is the loss of parish communities in the affected areas, something that has imperiled the Church's existing pastoral care. We are also concerned about the impact that other ecclesial groups are having on the faith of the Catholic population. For this reason, it is important to try and re-establish Catholic communities wherever possible and as quickly and sensibly as we can. At a time to be determined, churches, schools, rectories and convents as well as the two seminaries will have to be rebuilt. Given the multi-faceted nature of re-establishing these centers of parish life, education and faith formation, the Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America and CRS will work closely with the local Church in bringing the Church's unique expertise to bear in combating this challenge together. All construction will be undertaken and overseen to ensure that funds are carefully accounted for and that the construction is sound.

An impending challenge will be the arrival of the rains in Haiti. Already a few nights have brought misery as camps with less than adequate cover have experienced flooding. With the major storm season just around the corner in April/May, CRS is rushing to make a semi-permanent shelter available.

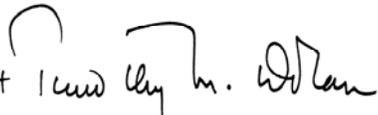
As we wrote to you in January, and as Monsignor David Malloy explained to you in his memorandum of February 12, CRS is receiving the funds that were taken up in a special collection and sent in from the dioceses. That collection amounted to \$58.7 million as of March 24<sup>th</sup> with 158 dioceses sending in part or all of their collection proceeds. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thanks to you and your faithful for this incredibly generous response. We kindly urge you to forward all remaining funds that were collected as soon as possible.

In addition, CRS has received, through its ongoing donation system, \$60 million in gifts from individuals, groups, colleges, foundations and corporations to be used for CRS' emergency response and general reconstruction efforts in Haiti. The Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America has received \$44,000 through phone, mail and on-line donations specifically to help the Church in Haiti. No doubt our annual collection for the Church in Latin America will provide another key source of support for these ongoing efforts.

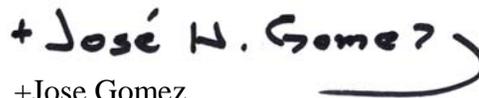
At this week's Administrative Committee meeting, a decision was made about apportioning the special collection proceeds for both humanitarian and ecclesial needs. It was agreed that sixty percent will go to humanitarian need and forty percent will go to ecclesial needs. The Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America and CRS will continue to collaborate closely to ensure that our efforts to help the Church in Haiti rebuild and respond to the physical and spiritual needs of the people are aligned.

In closing let us assure you that this will be a long and complicated rebuilding process but we believe that the Church can play a vital and effective role in supporting Haiti in charity and justice, accountability and compassion.

Sincerely Yours in Christ

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+Timothy Dolan  
Archbishop of New York  
Chairman, CRS Board

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+Jose Gomez  
Archbishop of San Antonio  
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America