



## ***Office of the President***

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Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles  
*President*

August 18, 2021

Your Eminence/Excellency:

This past weekend I offered my prayers of support to the people of Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake that struck on Saturday. It caused immense damage and resulted in a substantial loss of life on an island already challenged by social unrest and still rebuilding after a major 2010 earthquake. Tropical Storm Grace followed just yesterday adding devastation to an already reeling population. As a result of both disasters many Church properties, along with homes and businesses, have been severely damaged or destroyed. The impact will be long-lasting.

Our partners at Catholic Relief Services are on the ground providing humanitarian relief and will be with the community over its extended recovery. The chairman of our Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America has approved \$10,000 grants to each of the three most impacted dioceses to begin to help them as they look to rebuild the many parishes, rectories, schools, and other Church properties reduced to rubble. But much more support will be needed.

To respond as a unified Church, I suggest we take up a voluntary special collection for the humanitarian, long-term recovery, and significant Church needs arising from these calamities. I ask that we make a special appeal in our dioceses 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 emergency 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 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for pastoral and reconstruction needs of the Church as well as the efforts of Catholic Relief Services and/or Catholic Charities USA, the official relief agencies of the U.S. Catholic Church, as they and their local agencies respond to immediate emergency needs and aid in long-term rebuilding and recovery efforts. Funds will be used in response to the earthquake and Tropical Storm Grace calamities in Haiti 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 continue to be impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and that the local capacity for fund-raising this year may be more challenging than with past emergency collections. However, I have experienced the generosity of our people and their deep care for those in need. I know 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.

May Our Lady of Perpetual Help, patroness of Haiti, intercede for us that this special appeal will be successful and provide for the needs of the people and the Church in Haiti.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

+ José H. Gomez

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