



**September 16, 2005 - Rev. Arthur M. Coyle**  
**Homily for National Day of Prayer and Remembrance**  
**Hurricane Katrina**

Who among us has not been moved—possibly even to tears—by the devastation we have witnessed these past two weeks? Hurricane Katrina has been an enormous catastrophe of epic proportions. The suffering it has caused is overwhelming in loss of life, loss of homes, churches and schools. So many people have local connections with people in the Gulf States area. Boston has a unique connection, as one of our own priests is the Shepherd of the area most severely devastated – New Orleans and its environs. So many priests know Archbishop Hughes well as seminary philosophy professor, spiritual director, and rector, regional bishop of the Merrimack Region; and some of you have been here long enough to say that you prayed with him in this chapel and worked with him on this campus when he was Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia.

In a letter to the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the United States earlier this week, written from the temporary office of the Archbishop in the neighboring Diocese of Baton Rouge, where he is “at home” among at least 200,000 evacuees from his diocese, Archbishop Hughes writes of his gratitude for the quick response and outpouring of generosity from across the nation. He writes of how he and his administrative team have and are further developing a pastoral plan to provide priestly presence and ministry to the larger concentrations of evacuees in ten area dioceses in four neighboring states. New Orleans priests will serve as liaisons in each of those diocese and reach out to the displaced in need of pastoral care. Of course, many of those priests themselves have passed through harrowing experiences. Since communications are very difficult, a number of New Orleans priests have not yet been located, and it is believed that Farther Arthur Ginart lost his life when his rectory was carried into the Gulf during the storm.

The Archbishop goes on to speak about how five major relief agencies, both Catholic and secular, are working together to deliver food, water, bedding, and medical care to the poorest of the poor confined to shelters, the condition of most of the shelters leaving a lot to be desired. Within two months, they believe they will have all 50,000 of their Catholic school students back in classrooms – some in their own schools in less affected, out-lying areas, others being absorbed in the schools of neighboring dioceses, and others in satellite schools brought about through the reopening of closed schools and temporary structures on school campuses where their own administrators and teachers in exile will teach. Notre Dame Seminary will open in October at the Benedictine’s Saint Joseph Abbey in Covington, Louisiana, allowing students to go through the sacrificial and formative expenses of recovery close to the people they will serve.

I share all of this with you because it points out first-hand what an extraordinary challenge and daunting task lies ahead. And yet, Archbishop Hughes concludes his letter with these words: “We are convinced in faith that God wants us to move from being victims to victors in Christ Jesus. Please continue to pray that we will do what God wants in the way he wants.”

I don’t know about you, but since the impact of Hurricane Katrina and the resulting floods has been realized, I just cannot fathom the magnanimity and the scope of outreach and compassion we have seen. Truly, the worst of times has brought out the best in people, both across this nation and across the world. I found it staggering the other morning to read of the supreme generosity of so many countries coming to our assistance, some of those countries not having been our closest allies these past several years. From near and far, so many have contributed to answering the question posed by the scholar in today’s gospel, “And who is my neighbor?...with a clear response “Everyone.. particularly those most in need!”

An interesting editorial entitled “Morning Glory” appeared in the Boston Globe this past Tuesday (September 13,2005). It began, “Watching a sunrise is good for the soul, especially now, with the horrors of nature so much in the news.” It went on to speak of how what went down in darkness must come up and touch everything in view with spectacular light, and in beautiful figurative language spoke of sunrise being the spring of each day offering so many invitations of renewal and hope. The concluding paragraph returned to the present situation: “Watching a sunrise is an act of faith. No matter how destructive nature has been, the calm will return, and man will rebuild and heal. That is the promise in every new day!”



My friends, our being here today on this National Day of Prayer is an act of faith that surely “our help is from the Lord who made heaven and earth”...an act of faith in the power of Jesus Christ to “make all things new” – Jesus Christ, whose own death and resurrection we celebrate in this Eucharist...an act of faith in the living words of the Gospel, and hopefully a positive response to the challenge it gives us today to go beyond, far beyond, what is required of us, and to come down to that love which expresses itself in the compassion, and invites all of us to be Good Samaritans.

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