

Prot. No. 01-005/2021
September 26, 2021

Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family:
Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!

Almost all of us, no doubt, watched in horror and prayed with zeal as Hurricane Ida made its way across the south and up the east coast of our country. In its path, Ida wreaked devastation upon property and, most unfortunately, claimed the lives of scores of victims.

Our Diocese of New York and New Jersey was, thanks be to GOD, spared loss of lives from among the faithful. However, we were not exempt from destruction of church property and the homes of parishioners. In our Cathedral of the Transfiguration in Brooklyn, the entire basement – which was beautifully furnished as the parish hall – was ravaged by flood waters. The flooring and wall paneling, major appliances and furniture, and valuable parish artifacts were all destroyed. In our Princeton parish of the Mother of God, families experienced total loss of basement and first floor possessions. In Yonkers, five feet of water in garages destroyed vehicles of four families from the parish. And I am sure that there are more cases of which we are not yet aware.

In the face of disaster and need, the Sacred Scriptures call us to respond with self-sacrificial love, after the example of Our Lord and Savior Who gave so much to so many in His ministry and gave His very life on the Cross for the salvation of us all. When people were hungry, it was a little boy who offered five loaves and two fishes to help Christ feed the multitude (John 6:1-15) ... in the only miracle of Jesus' ministry recorded in all four Gospels. Barely a decade later, the Antiochian Christians were inspired to take up a collection and send it to the poor of the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:28). We are called by the Gospel to do the same.

I am appealing to all our parishes to take up a special collection for "Hurricane Ida Relief," which will be distributed to those in need across the Diocese. This should be done within the next few weeks, with a target date of completion of November 1, so that aid can be offered in a timely manner to those in need. One parish check, totaling all the contributions, should be written to the Diocese and sent to the Diocesan Chancery, 33 Hewitt Avenue, Bronxville, New York 10708.

If your parish has already taken a collection and offered funds to aid your local community or to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), or that is what you have planned to do, thank GOD. Sacrificial love knows no boundaries. Our SS. Peter and Paul Church in Manville, for example, has offered its parish hall to a sister Orthodox community in the city that was totally devastated. Whatever you can do "for the least of My brethren," Our Lord tells us, "you have done it for Me" (Matthew 25:40). My prayer is that He will bless you all abundantly, as only He can, for whatever support each of you is able to offer.

We are in the month of celebrating the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. Let us not only lift up the Sign of our salvation, but let us take up our cross and follow Our Lord Himself in offering tangibly a gift of self-sacrificial love to those who have lost so much in the devastating waters of Hurricane Ida. Those of us who were blessed not to have suffered significant damage, in gratitude to Almighty GOD, should consider giving of ourselves to helping others in this time of tragic disaster.

Grateful for your response of kindness and generosity which are a reflection of your faith and love, I am

Devotedly yours in His service,

+ Archbishop Michael
Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey