

# Archbishop appeals for aid for Myanmar, China

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien sent the following letter to pastors on May 15.

May 15, 2008

Dear Fathers,

Like many of you, I have been eager to communicate with our Catholic people about assisting our sisters and brothers in Myanmar, who are suffering in the wake of Cyclone Nargis, which struck the delta region on May 2 and is being called one of the worst cyclones in decades.

As you have likely learned through the media, international relief efforts have been painstakingly slow due to controls put in place by the authorities in Myanmar. Thus, we have proceeded with caution in planning an Archdiocesan-wide special collection. Sadly, in the meantime another tragedy has struck as an earthquake in China has left over 20,000 people dead and another 26,000 missing. Political realities in that country have also created questions in the minds of potential donors about the certainty that their donations will reach their intended destinations.

Just yesterday, I have received the following message from Catholic Relief Services President, Mr. Ken Hackett:

"Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is actively supporting the Caritas Internationalis network in responding to the suffering caused by Cyclone Nargis that struck Myanmar earlier this month. Initial relief efforts by Caritas Internationalis are expected to reach 40,000 people with food, household living items, shelter, medical and psychological care, and means for child protection.

"CRS is committed to helping as much as we can given the constraints of the situation. If for any reason we raise more funds than we have the capacity to utilize in Myanmar, we are committed to using those funds to respond to other natural disasters in Southeast Asia.

“CRS also expresses its condolences for all those in China who have lost loved ones and suffered in the recent devastating earthquake in Sichuan province. CRS works in China with four partners, predominantly on HIV and AIDS prevention and health care support. These partners are not located in areas affected by the earthquake. CRS will provide assistance to those affected by this devastating earthquake through Caritas Hong Kong.”

With these assurances in place, I ask you to consider taking up a special collection or to use the parish poor box to collect funds which will be forwarded to Catholic Relief Services. Proceeds from the collection are to be sent to the Division of Fiscal Services at the Catholic Center.

I also ask you to join me in praying for the people of Myanmar and China, that their enormous suffering might be assuaged by the outpouring of love and support of others and by the compassionate love of our Lord, Jesus. And may the Lord bless all efforts to help end the suffering in those lands.

In the Lord,

+Edwin F. O'Brien

Archbishop of Baltimore