

# Catholic community responds to tsunami

Though the April 2 tsunami that devastated several Solomon Islands villages occurred halfway across the globe from St. Dominic, Hamilton, parishioners were urged to help in the relief effort.

St. Dominic pastor Father James P. Kiesel added a special collection to his Easter Sunday Masses and said it was even more important to reach out to the people affected by the tsunami that killed at least 28 people and flattened villages, because it was smaller in scale than the 2004 tidal wave and will receive less media coverage.

The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami killed hundreds of thousands in several nations and is considered one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern history.

"The world isn't paying as much attention to this one," Father Kiesel said. "But, a tsunami is a tsunami and the people are still in need of our help."

Catholic Relief Services stands ready to commit an initial \$100,000 to aid emergency relief operations in the Solomon Islands after a powerful earthquake triggered the deadly tsunami and plans to be fully involved in the recovery effort.

"CRS will respond through our sister agencies Caritas Australia and Caritas Solomon Islands," said Ken Hackett, president of the Baltimore-based international humanitarian agency. "We will provide our partners on the ground with whatever they need to respond to this tragedy."

The tiny nation of South Pacific islands east of Papua New Guinea - with a population of just more than 550,000 - is about 85 percent Christian and home to two Catholic archdioceses, one in Honiara and one in Gizo, said Pat Johns, CRS emergency response coordinator based in Baltimore.

Among the dead was a protestant bishop who was attending an ordination when the tsunami pounded the Solomon Islands' coastlines with 16-foot waves, said Mr. Johns,

a parishioner of St. John the Evangelist, Severna Park.

“We have proposed helping in the recovery effort with the reconstruction of about 900 homes,” he said. “We have a person on our emergency response team who is a shelter expert, and we’ll get him out there in about two to three weeks time.”

People can donate to CRS on its Web site at [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org), by phone at 1-877-HELP-CRS, or by mailing a check to Catholic Relief Services at P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, Md. 21203-7090.

The initial \$100,000 commitment by CRS is intended to help in all phases of the Solomon Islands relief effort, Mr. Johns said. “We don’t want them to be under funded.”