

# Catholic Parishes Hold Collection for Disaster Victims

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Archbishop of Baltimore, has asked parishes in the Archdiocese to take up a special collection for those suffering in the wake of recent natural disasters in China and Myanmar.

In a letter to pastors on May 15, Archbishop O'Brien wrote, "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."

Since that time, the Archbishop has received assurances from Ken Hackett, President of Catholic Relief Services, the international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States, that the organization is able to provide relief in both regions by working through third-party relief agencies such as Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Hong Kong.

"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," Hackett wrote in a letter to the Archbishop.

Some parishes held special collections this past weekend and others are expected to do so in the coming weeks. All monies will be collected by the Archdiocese and distributed to Catholic Relief Services. A similar collection took place following the December 2004 tsunami in Asia, leading to a donation to CRS in the amount of \$2.5 million, the largest by any diocese at the time.

Statistical note: Currently, the Archdiocese is home to 517,679 Catholics worshipping in over 150 parishes in Baltimore City and the following counties: Allegany, Anne

Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, Howard, and Washington.