

Peter's Pence Collection lets church to respond to world's disasters

When parishioners contribute to the second collection in churches throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore Sept. 1-2, their money will go to the Peter's Pence Collection - a fund that enables Pope Benedict XVI to quickly provide aid when disaster strikes.

The collection was officially established by Pope Pius IX in 1871 in honor of St. Peter, allowing the Catholic Church to give emergency financial aid throughout the world.

"It allows the pope to respond to the many requests made to him from the poor churches in countries around the world where the people suffer" as a result of war, oppression and natural disasters, said Bishop Denis J. Madden, urban vicar for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. "It's a very important collection. It does a lot of good for people who need immediate help."

In a 2006 address to members of the St. Peter Circle, Pope Benedict XVI said the Peter's Pence Collection is a classic expression of Rome's charitable initiatives.

"The gesture has not only a practical value, but a strong symbolic one," he said, "as a sign of communion with the pope and attention to the needs of one's brothers; and therefore your service possesses a refined ecclesial character."

It's an example of the faithful collectively helping those who struggle, Bishop Madden said.

"It allows the whole Catholic Church to join with our Holy Father in responding to

disasters, like when a hurricane devastates a community,” he said. “So we can be part of the whole generous act to help these people during challenging times.”