

CNS -- SVD Father Brendan Murphy witnesses devastation... (posted Sep 02)

KATRINA-MURPHY Sep-1-2005 (630 words) With photo. xxxn

Priest witnesses devastation in drive north from Mississippi coast

By Mark Pattison
[Catholic News Service](#)

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Divine Word Father Brendan Murphy thought he was just going to celebrate weekend Masses in Lizana, Miss., and then head back to his order's monastery in nearby Bay St. Louis.

That was not to be.

Even though it's less than 24 miles from one town to the other, Hurricane Katrina made Father Murphy a virtual prisoner in the rectory of St. Ann Church in Lizana until after it blew through southern Mississippi Aug. 29. Once he was able to leave Aug. 31, a bridge between Lizana and Bay St. Louis was out, and Interstate 10 was closed in the area, prompting a trip northward to Jackson, where the Divine Word order staffs a parish.

"I tried to get back to Bay St. Louis but I couldn't get back," Father Murphy told [Catholic News Service](#) in a telephone interview from Jackson diocesan headquarters, where he had stopped to ask for directions to the Divine Word-staffed parish.

"The police were turning us away and the roads were impassable. Railway tracks were running along there and you couldn't get past the tracks. Looking down, I could see that every house was in a terrible state.

"The tops of the houses were gone," he added. "I don't know how to describe it. It just looked like a bunch of shacks in disarray. I was in shock when I saw it."

Parishioners at St. Ann had asked for a priest to substitute for their pastor, who was on vacation. Father Murphy became the designated substitute.

He said he didn't make any references to the coming hurricane in his homilies. "I think everybody presumed it was going toward New Orleans," Father Murphy said. "I think everybody realized it was going to have an effect on the area, but nobody knew how much."

At St. Ann, for instance, "every building got damaged. The door was torn off the front of the church. Every building had a roof either half-taken or shingles gone," the priest told CNS

"I had my car in the garage and part of the roof came down in the garage and landed in my car. I don't know how the water got in there, but it was blowing hard. I was in the garage at one stage and I could see the garage door buckling, so I got scared and I went back inside," he added. "I had to force (the door open) with some of the men (of the parish) to get my car out."

The Irish-born Father Murphy said the St. Ann rectory lost power at 7 a.m. Aug. 29, as the hurricane was at full force. Power was still out when he left Aug. 31, "and it probably won't be back for a long time. I didn't see any building from, say, 10 miles down to the Gulf (of Mexico) that hadn't been damaged," he said.

Complicating matters was the fact that he couldn't use his cell phone. "It (the power) had run out, and I couldn't charge it, that was the problem. I couldn't reach anybody, I couldn't find anybody," Father Murphy said. He talked with CNS even before he called relatives in Ireland and England to

assure them he was OK.

Since he couldn't return to Bay St. Louis, Father Murphy made the trek north to Jackson on U.S. Highway 49.

"There were no problems along the way. Traffic was heavy, but there was no gasoline (for sale) along the way. I'm glad I had a half-tank in my car," he said.

"There were lots of emergency vehicles and Army vehicles heading that way (to Mississippi's Gulf Coast). There were lots of trees down all the way along. Some houses demolished, some houses without shingles, all that kind of stuff," he said.

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CNS -- SVD Bishop J. Terry Steib of Memphis stranded in Bay St. Louis (posted Sep 02)

KATRINA-BISHOPS Sep-1-2005 (800 words) xxxn

Most bishops in hurricane's path accounted for

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Efforts by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Washington headquarters to get through to bishops whose dioceses were in the path of Hurricane Katrina generally met with success in the initial days after the hurricane, as power and telephone outages left bishops and laity alike incommunicado.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Gulf Coast Aug. 29.

As of the morning of Sept. 1, the USCCB had yet not heard from Bishop Sam G. Jacobs of Houma-Thibodaux, La., but had heard from a priest who had seen him. The other bishops in the hurricane-affected region had been accounted for.

Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes of New Orleans was staying at a parish in Baton Rouge, La., and with the assistance of Louisiana state troopers was visiting shelters in the Baton Rouge area. Baton Rouge, about 80 miles from New Orleans, has taken in 100,000 people from New Orleans.

Archbishop Hughes joined with Bishop Robert W. Muench of Baton Rouge, Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco and other civic and religious leaders for a prayer service at the Office of Emergency Preparedness Aug. 31.

"This is a challenging moment for us all," the archbishop said at the service. "God has brought us to our knees in the face of devastation. We do not really know how to respond. Powerlessness leads us to prayer, and when we turn to God, God offers us his grace."

He asked for prayers for those "who have been taken from our midst" and for those who are "organizing the response and leading our people so well."

Archbishop Hughes also prayed for those who might take advantage of the desperate situation by looting or preying on others.

"Remove us from any evil in this time of need," he said. "Lord, do not let us be impacted by the actions of those who increase the suffering of others by taking advantage of the situation."

Bishop Thomas J. Rodi of Biloxi, Miss., called USCCB headquarters with the word that he was safe and in his office, but with limited cell phone service and no water or electricity. He said 20 percent of the diocese's churches and a third of their schools had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, and that every rectory, school, convent and diocesan building sustained moderate to severe damage.

Bishop Joseph N. Latino of Jackson, Miss., spent much of Aug. 30 looking for a niece of his who lives on the Mississippi coast, reported Janna Avalon, editor of the Mississippi Catholic, diocesan newspaper. "I don't know if he was successful," she added. Bishop Latino met with diocesan officials in his office Aug. 31, Avalon said.

Bishop J. Terry Steib of Memphis, Tenn., who was ordained to the priesthood in the Society of the Divine Word, was stranded in Bay St. Louis, Miss., where his order has a monastery. His car

was destroyed in the hurricane. "I saw him Saturday afternoon (Aug. 27)", said Divine Word Father Brendan Murphy in a telephone interview with [Catholic News Service](#) from Jackson. However, a bridge to Bay St. Louis was out, and Interstate 10 was flooded, which made driving into or out of Bay St. Louis impossible, he added.

Bishop David E. Foley of Birmingham, Ala., said electricity at diocesan offices had been restored, and he has been meeting with advisers on the hurricane and its aftermath.

"We've been blessed. Our main thing was trees down and power lines down. But there wasn't any real flooding or anything as serious as Mobile or even Gulfport (Miss.) or New Orleans," Bishop Foley told CNS. "My house, I don't have electricity," he added, but given the situation in other dioceses, "so what? ... There's no comparison."

Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile, Ala., reported to the USCCB that he was OK, as had Louisiana Bishops Ronald P. Herzog of Alexandria and Michael Jarrell of Lafayette. The extent of damage to their diocesan properties could not be immediately learned.

Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., USCCB president, called for a national collection and prayers in churches for those afflicted by Hurricane Katrina.

"All the bishops of the United States are concerned for the number of church personnel who are isolated, working under great adversity, and perhaps not even aware that the whole rest of the country is praying for them," he said. "We don't even know if all of them are safe."

Bishop Skylstad said many of the affected dioceses "are the least able to cope with this adversity."

"Most of the dioceses are home mission dioceses, which struggle to survive under the best of conditions," he said. Home mission dioceses are those which cannot operate solely on local donations and rely on other dioceses for support.

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Contributing to this story was Peter Finney Jr. in Baton Rouge.

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CNS -- Hurricane devastation challenges religious orders, Catholic colleges (posted Sep 02)

KATRINA-ORDERS Sep-2-2005 (1,040 words) xxxn

Hurricane devastation challenges religious orders, Catholic colleges

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- The Gulf Coast devastation left by Hurricane Katrina in late August posed major challenges to some Catholic religious orders with headquarters or educational institutions in the hurricane's path.

With the entire city of New Orleans being evacuated and shut down for months, the fall semester appeared to be entirely lost for the three Catholic colleges and universities there.

The Jesuits' Loyola University of New Orleans has about 6,000 students.

Xavier University of Louisiana, run by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and long a leading educator of African-Americans, has more than 4,000.

Our Lady of Holy Cross College, run by the Marianites of Holy Cross, has more than 1,400.

Other Jesuit colleges and universities across the nation were scrambling to accommodate any Loyola students who would want to transfer to their institutions for the semester.

A spokeswoman for the Blessed Sacrament Sisters told **Catholic News Service** Sept. 1 that she knew of no contingency plans by Xavier that could have anticipated an entire semester's shutdown. "I'm sure there aren't any," said Sister Juliana Haynes, the order's public affairs coordinator. "Nobody expected this disaster. We're still trying to grasp the horror of it."

Holy Cross Sister Judith Coreil, public relations director of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Home, an assisted living facility in Opelousas, La., told CNS by phone Sept. 1 that it was too early to say what options students of Our Lady of Holy Cross might have. She said about 100 members of the Marianites of Holy Cross, including 26 in an assisted living facility, had been forced to evacuate New Orleans, but all were safe.

She said the University of Louisiana in Lafayette has offered to take in students from New Orleans schools and the order might try to arrange temporary student transfers to institutions run by other branches of the order, such as St. Mary's College or Notre Dame University in Indiana.

In Bay St. Louis, Miss., the Divine Word Missionaries lost their provincial headquarters and retreat house but all community members were reported safe.

The entire community at Jesuit provincial headquarters in New Orleans moved 100 miles west to the Jesuit Spirituality Center in Grand Coteau, La.

Ordinary phone and e-mail communications with the hardest-hit region of the Gulf Coast, from west of New Orleans to Gulfport and Biloxi, Miss., were still almost nonexistent several days after the storm, but information gradually trickled out as residents reached inland towns and cities where communications were unaffected or had been restored.

The Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities quickly made use of its Web site, www.ajcunet.edu, to post available information about Loyola and set up an alternate Web site for

the university's communications. It included a Web log, or blog, where the geographically scattered faculty and staff could exchange phone numbers and other information.

Jesuit Father Charles L. Currie, association president, issued a statement late Aug. 31 saying all 27 other Jesuit schools in the country have "agreed to admit Loyola students as visiting students for the fall semester, with the expectation that they would return to Loyola in the spring semester with credits earned transferable back to Loyola."

Xavier University of Cincinnati, run by Jesuits, was not connected with Xavier University of Louisiana apart from sharing the same name. But that connection was enough to draw thousands of e-mails and Web-site hits from people seeking information about the New Orleans school.

So the Cincinnati school posted information on its Web site about the New Orleans school and set up Web links where more information could be found, including a link to an emergency Web site created by Xavier of Louisiana to keep students and faculty abreast of what was happening.

The Cincinnati institution also started an on-campus hurricane-relief collection and announced plans to accept displaced students from New Orleans as visiting students for the fall semester.

Late Sept. 1 the Xavier of Louisiana emergency Web site reported that all students still on campus had been moved to a nearby staging area, under protection of campus and city police, to be taken that evening by bus to Southern University in Baton Rouge and Grambling State University in Grambling.

Jesuit-run Spring Hill College in Mobile, Ala., which suffered only minor hurricane damage, offered to enroll up to 150 students displaced from New Orleans schools as visiting students for the fall semester. It waived application fees and said that since transcripts may not be obtainable it will accept other evidence of eligibility for admission.

In a letter to Seattle University faculty and staff, Jesuit Father Stephen V. Sundborg, that university's president, said the school will take in displaced students as visiting students for the fall semester.

From their mission center in Techny, Ill., the Divine Word Missionaries posted news that the building housing the order's southern provincial headquarters in Bay St. Louis was destroyed. "The new retreat center is in shambles," the posting said. "The main residence sustained heavy damage."

The first floor of the residence was flooded and the building "has no electricity, potable water or sewage. Meals are prepared outside on charcoal grills," the notice said.

"Recovery and rebuilding will not be measured in weeks, but in months and years," it said.

It said several order members in need of medical assistance had been evacuated. In the first hours after the storm the community flagged down a rescue helicopter to take Father George Artis out to Mobile because he needed dialysis.

Xavier University was founded by St. Katharine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, whose motherhouse is in Bensalem, Pa. Reached there by telephone, Sister Haynes said that she learned Sept. 1 that the sisters at the university were still there along with about 400 students, but that they were safe and had enough food and water.

She said Norman C. Francis, president of the university since 1968 -- who refused to leave before the hurricane -- had finally evacuated and gone to Lake Charles, La., and from there was working on arrangements for a bus caravan to bring the students out.

She also said she just learned that morning that the members of the order who staffed Xavier Prep School in New Orleans had been evacuated to Rayne, La.

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Dariusz Garbaciak, SVD -- Hurricane Katrina affects SVD Southern Province
(posted Sep 05)

Hurricane Katrina affects SVD Southern Province.

Dear friends and benefactors,

The United States is facing the worst natural disaster in many decades. Thousands of people on the Gulf coast have lost a life's worth of possessions, their livelihoods, many even their very lives. Some areas were completely washed away, as if by a mighty hand. One of the areas most affected is our Seminary in Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi, where the eye of the hurricane passed directly overhead. St. Augustine's Divine Word Seminary has served for many years as a school for future missionaries and retirement home for our aged and infirmed priests and Brothers. The Seminary and retirement buildings were completely destroyed by the hurricane.

These days our entire attention is focused on those who are suffering the most. In this time of tragedy we are praying for those in need and asking for your generous help in donations. Your help is not only important; it is a vital necessity. We rely on your stewardship and generosity; and we are sure that as a part of our missionary family, you will consider a donation and keep our Divine Word priests and brothers in your prayers.

May God bless you and your families

In the Divine Word,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Dariusz Garbaciak SVD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rev. Dariusz Garbaciak, SVD
Provincial Treasurer

USC -- Hurricane Katrina devastates SVD Southern Province (posted Sep 05)

BREAKING NEWS

Hurricane Katrina devastates SVD Southern Province.



The province headquarters at Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi is basically destroyed. The retreat center is in shambles. There is damage to all the other buildings, including the main chapel. All their vehicles were underwater and not usable now.

The community, along with some other refugees of the storm, are getting by with no power, a leaking roof, dwindling supplies, and cooking with charcoal outside.

Chicago Province is relaying messages for them, contacting relatives, and trying to help in whatever way is possible. We are trying to organize a convoy of vehicles and supplies to bring to the Bay.

USW -- Hurricane Victims (posted Sep 05)

HURRICANCE VICTIMS

All of the Divine Word Missionaries living in the hurricane Katrina zone have been accounted for and in good health, thanks God. Unfortunately, the Province Center, the Retreat Center, the retirement home, and everything else have been destroyed. To get the latest update on our missionaries who have been relocated to different places please call 847-272-2700. For more information and/or to make a donation please go to **www.divinewordgifts.org**

USC Mission Center -- Hurricane Katrina Affects Divine Word Missionaries...
(posted Sep 05)

HURRICANE KATRINA AFFECTS DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES IN LOUISIANA AND MISSISSIPPI



Hurricane Katrina slammed the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Mississippi, devastating the Divine Word headquarters in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

Twenty Divine Word Missionaries make Bay St Louis their home. The community house and campus are located about one mile from the bay of St. Louis and the Gulf of Mexico.

Most of the priests and Brothers are in retirement. Communication with members has been difficult and sporadic. Fortunately, all the members of the community survived the storm, but the provincial headquarters was destroyed. The new retreat center is in shambles. The main residence sustained heavy damage.

The priests and Brothers of the community weathered the storm in the residence but were forced to move to the second floor when the entire first floor was completely flooded.

The residence has no electricity, potable water or sewage. Meals are prepared outside on charcoal grills.

One member, Fr. Artis, was airlifted to Mobile so he could receive regular dialysis. Other members with special medical problems were taken to the Divine Word parish in Vicksburg, MS. Divine Word Missionaries operate parishes in these Mississippi towns: Bay St. Louis, Jackson, Greenville, Vicksburg, Tupelo and Clarksdale. Louisiana cities where Divine Word Missionaries serve are: New Orleans, Eunice, Opelousas, Lafayette, St. Martinville, Jeanerette, Maurice, Broussard and Baton Rouge.

Recovery and rebuilding will not be measured in weeks, but in months and years. Please pray for all the victims of the hurricane.

Yours in the Divine Word,

Bro. Dennis Newton SVD
Mission Director