

BOARD LAUNCHES RELIEF EFFORTS FOR HURRICANE KATRINA VICTIMS

Catholic students and staff are answering the call of those in need as a result of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Their response began the first day of school with prayer intentions for those who perished, and for those who have been left with little but the clothes on their back.

In his communication to principals and staff, Director of Education, Paul Toffanello, asked them to consider a project that will assist in getting relief to our neighbours. "There are many fine examples of how individuals can assist," stated Toffanello. "We are not going to pre-determine a dollar amount of money nor are we going to stipulate where the money should be sent. We ask school administrators to discuss with their staff the level of response that they wish to engage in and to facilitate the collection of funds. For many, the donation of money is the most practical response in a short period of time. Some organizations collecting money will apply it to relief immediately. Other organizations are collecting money to provide housing in the long term. We should remember that these organizations are in the best position to determine how the funds should be spent now and in the future."

Toffanello noted that the most important response as a faith community should be to join together in prayer. To this end, he encouraged all school staffs to offer age-appropriate reflections and prayer services with students. As a preparation for prayers and/or prayer services, teachers were asked to dedicate some instructional time to teaching very timely and age-appropriate lessons that will invite our children to a better understanding and appreciation for the plight of our brothers and sisters in the southern U.S. They need to be reminded that our prayers are so very important in this time of tragedy.

At an administrative meeting this week, Toffanello showed a clip from a news broadcast regarding a Catholic school community in New Orleans which is regrouping and looking for alternate ways to deliver Catholic education outside of the traditional bricks and mortar setting. "The resolve of the teachers and staff at the identified school is absolutely inspiring," noted Toffanello. "We share with them a common mission of providing students with a faith-based learning experience. Despite their own personal tragedies, they are finding the strength in their faith to gather as a learning community and fulfill this mission. As their fellow Christians, we must find a way to reach out to them and help them rebuild their Catholic school communities."

The Board's Pastoral Care Worker, Mike Buhler, will be available as a spiritual guide to our schools and to help them raise awareness about the role that we all play within the global village. Further details on school initiatives will be available in the near future.

**For more information, contact Mélanie Bidal-Mainville
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During a Commissioning Service at St. Paul School today, Father Pat Lafleur encouraged students to keep the victims of Hurricane Katrina in their prayers.



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