

USCCB president urges special collection to aid disaster-stricken dioceses

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has asked his fellow bishops to consider having their parishes take up a special collection to aid dioceses and parishes stricken by recent natural disasters.

“The traditional storm season has only just begun and already we have witnessed the devastating impact of Hurricane Laura and the California wildfires,” the archbishop wrote in a letter to his fellow bishops. “Thousands of homes, businesses, and churches have been severely damaged or destroyed and the impacts will be long-lasting.”

Archbishop Gomez acknowledged the severity of the impact of COVID-19 on parish and diocesan activities and its challenging impact on fundraising, but he also expressed hope in the generosity of the faithful and their care for those in need.

“We offer our prayers to families who have lost loved ones, homes and businesses,” Archbishop Gomez said.

Funds collected will become part of the Bishops Emergency Disaster Fund and will be used to support the efforts of Catholic Charities USA and/or Catholic Relief Services, according to Archbishop Gomez. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will also be allotted some of the collections’ proceeds for pastoral and reconstruction needs of the church.

Funds will be used in response to Hurricane Laura and any other disasters that occur and will be distributed where they are most needed, he said. However, if those needs become unnecessary, impractical or impossible to fill, the USCCB may

use contributions for other emergency disaster relief where it is most needed as determined by the USCCB's Committee on National Collections using its emergency response protocol.

Archbishop Gomez said Archbishop Paul D. Etienne of Seattle, chairman of that committee, has been in touch with bishops in disaster-stricken areas "to learn about their situations and to offer our prayers and our desire to be of assistance in this time of need."