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To All parishes

AID TO DISASTER AREAS

Last Friday a pastoral associate phoned about giving help to the people in Haiti suffering from the recent flooding. Here is some information relative to this and other world disasters.

1 Charity responses

10% of Development and Peace funds is put aside for disaster relief. Donations are always accepted for any disaster to be funneled quickly to the international Catholic group Caritas. Donations are made through a parish and thence to D and P. You may go to the D and P website www.devp.org to obtain further information about appeals for such disasters.

Other agencies equally ready to respond include Mennonite Central Committee, the Red Cross and its Muslim counterpart, Red Crescent.

2 A matter of Social Justice

Social justice is always about recognizing causes and trying to effect change. In the case of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes, we can do little although structural precautions to buildings in earthquake prone zones are possible. Concerning flooding in low lying places adjacent to oceans, people are researching this phenomenon in relation to global warming.

As to the situation in Haiti, we are seeing how precautions and programs were possible in Florida, a highly developed part of the First World. Yet some residents of Florida, not citizens of the United States, have been excluded from some benefits. Also latest reports of the Haitian situation indicate a breakdown in the fragile political and economic structure of this Third World country. The first world should ponder if it is partly responsible for this longstanding issue.

Where inland flooding occurs, we have to ask ourselves if this in part due to faulty dam siting and construction. Another cause is clear cutting of slopes for local fuel use, lumber exports and the corporate takeover of land for cash crop exports to the First World.

As to the fifty or so wars world wide, here again a sense of justice and of sharing will too often prevent wars with the consequent millions of refugees.

3 Role of the Media

Media, it is true, have a responsibility to report the news yet we need to know the dual purpose. While personnel take risks to provide the story, the media are in the business of selling a product.

The Florida and Caribbean experiences make “good” news on the North American continent and are relatively easy and safe to cover. At the same time we should know that some of what we see and hear can come from media personnel within the safety of an airport’s perimeter fence.

Here in North America little is known of the huge loss of life and living that occurred earlier this year to the people of Bangladesh living on the shores of the Indian Ocean.

We should ponder how unfortunate it is that it is our visual pictorial sense the media uses exclusively to exploit our sense of charity with justice rarely being part of the picture.