



October 2005

## ***Development Directions***

A free resource for pastors, principals, development directors, volunteers and anyone engaged in the ministry of Catholic development.

### **IS YOUR PARISH AND/OR SCHOOL'S DISASTER PLAN IN PLACE, TESTED, AND READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION?**

#### **It Could Happen to You**

The events of the past six weeks in South Louisiana have led many people to realize that they were not prepared for anything like the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Rita. As you have all read, seen, been told, and even experienced – what is taking place along the Gulf Coast is unprecedented. This catastrophe has left many Catholic parishes and schools crippled and helpless in the aftermath of this tragedy. Even in my own parish, Our Lady of Lourdes in Slidell, Louisiana, we never thought that we would be left without a church, with our school classrooms living proof of what a 26 ft storm surge could do, with our gymnasium now condemned by the City because of structural damage due to 175 mph winds, and with our cafeteria and Parish Life Center now gutted because of mold and mildew from 12 ft of water. And yet, we thank God each day for the wonderful support and assistance we are beginning to receive from parishes and schools throughout the country.

This situation has been the catalyst for Catholic institutions to ask the question of themselves: Are we prepared? What would we do if we had a natural disaster or a catastrophe? What steps would we take if we were put in the public spotlight due to illegal or criminal happenings? We do know that unexpected emergencies have the ability to shut down operations, or even worse, put us out of business for weeks or even months. Are you prepared for this? Have you taken the opportunity to sit down and plan for the inevitable? Do you have your "Disaster Plan" in place?

There are key steps we invite you to consider as you put your plan together. We also invite you to consider what has been, and continues to be, the major challenge for so many Catholic leaders in our area of the country – communication. With hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes, forget phone lines; most will be useless. Forget cell phones; the towers will be down. Forget e-mail; many phone lines and wireless networks will be gone. Forget television and radio as means to reaching people; they primarily are one way vehicles to receive information in those early days following a disaster.

However, with all of this said, there is one method of communication that you need to learn, and most already know how: ***text messaging with your cell phone***. Believe it or not, for thousands of people, this was the one way we could stay in touch and make sure our family, friends and loved ones were safe. Please do not ask me how the technology works, because I do not know. I do know that it does work even when your cell phone cannot even get a blip on the reception screen.

## The Disaster Plan

### Step 1: With parish and/or school leaders, determine what could go wrong.

- Conduct a risk assessment that would identify what could go wrong, the effect on your parish/school if something does go wrong, and what priority you should take in minimizing your risk exposure.
- During this assessment, you should look at the following:
  - Identify the threats and risks your parish/school faces
    - Threats are anything that could happen to your people, infrastructure or reputation, including natural threats (hurricanes and tornadoes), technology threats (records being lost), or human threats (theft or human tragedy)
  - Once you have identified the threats, determine how vulnerable you are to them. How reliable is your backup system? Are your teachers, staff and students trained for an earthquake? What about your security system? What if a natural disaster interrupted your Catholic school and/or parish for weeks and weeks? How would you operate?
  - Rank your threats in some priority order, but the most important thing is to get them on paper. Identify them – even if you think the possibility is very remote. If it could happen, and it could threaten your existence as a Catholic institution, then please write it down.
  - Sample list:
    - Hurricane that destroys the church
    - Fire that destroys the school
    - Theft that steals all confidential information
    - Shooting that takes place on site
    - Arrest of key personnel of Catholic institution

### Step 2: Develop a Plan.

- A “Disaster Plan” must be written down; it must be created by the stakeholders of the parish and/or school; it must be shared and understood by all who would be impacted by it. Granted, parts of your plan will be mandated by law or code (evacuation plans, antifraud laws, etc.); however, much of this plan should be created by you and your stakeholders.
- Designate a chain of command, listing names and contact information of those responsible for making decisions, monitoring response, and recovering back to normal operations. In the case of key people not being available, clearly state the line of command and where the decision making would fall.
- Make a list – with detailed information - of the people and agencies that would need to be contacted in some manner. Include in this, the names of the people responsible for assessing the degree of risk to life and property, and who needs to be contacted.
- Clearly outline, how you will communicate down your chain of command and the order of these communication vehicles should some not work.
- Ahead of time, put together a Disaster Recovery Team with enough members to move forward should some of the members not be available. Have a Plan A, Plan B and Plan C in terms of when you would meet, where you would meet, and how soon you would meet after the crisis or disaster.

- While putting together your plan, check with your diocese to see if they have worked up a sample Disaster Plan for any parishes and/or schools in your area.

### **Step 3: Be Ready to Respond.**

- Once the plan is written, educate, educate, educate – all necessary people about the whole plan or parts of the plan – whichever is applicable.
- If they have not been involved before, give them the opportunity to “dry run” the plan and talk over how things might go in an emergency situation. You may find that there are changes that you need to make to some of the plan’s details.
- Be sure and share your plan with the local authorities – fire department and police, emergency and medical services. They, too, will have input into the plan.
- With your administration, parish staff, faculty, and other key people in your parish and/or school, make sure training is given in the following areas:
  - Equipment shutdown
  - Emergency notification process
  - Building evacuation
  - Fire extinguisher use
  - Basic first aid
  - CPR

### **Step 4: Getting Back to Square One**

- Once you’ve covered your bases on the first three steps, take time to think about the worst-case scenarios and make some plans for how you will recover. Some questions to think about:
  - Where will you find a new location to temporarily or permanently operate from?
  - Where can you get replace equipment, furnishings, materials, etc.?
  - Who will help you clean up after the disaster?
  - How will you recover your critical data?
  - How will you reach your people?
  - How will they reach you?
  - How will they get to your location?
  - Are your vendors prepared?
  - What programs and/or agencies are available to help you?
  - What will it take for you to get back operational?
  - What about your reputation?

## **Steps Taken by Our Lady of Lourdes**

At our parish, we continue to move through a number of key steps in order to get our church and school back up and running. These are the pieces that have been valuable for us, keeping in mind that it was over 10 days before we could even get back into the area to assess anything.

1. Father Adrian Hall, our pastor, established a Mass schedule. In fact the only Mass we could offer the first weekend was held that Sunday at 10:30 AM at the corner of Pontchartrain Blvd. and Winchester – outside on the street corner.
2. We formed a leadership team that meets on a weekly basis.
3. We began to post announcements on two bulletin boards – one outside of the school and the other out on the street in front of the torn down church.
4. We pulled a trailer on campus and set up regular parish office hours from 9

AM–3 PM, Monday thru Friday.

5. We got in touch with the archdiocese to determine what support they would lend.
6. Using professional service, we began to inspect, clean and detox all facilities.
7. We established a website to seek outside contributions – of money, supplies, and professional help.
8. We announced a series of Town Hall meetings.
9. We continue to try and determine what amount the insurance company will be good for.
10. We created a short term and a long term supply list for both the church and the school (equipment, supplies, furnishings, etc.)
11. We established contact with all creditors, banking institutions, mail system, electric, water, sewer, and telephone officials to give and receive applicable information.
12. We continue to work hard to establish a physical base of operation on campus, other than the trailer outside of the rectory.
13. We continue to try and nail down the long term plan and timeline of what to do with the remains of the church, the school buildings, the parish life center, the gymnasium, and the cafeteria.
14. We accepted the generous offer for our school children to attend OLL on another Catholic school's campus from 1:00 PM–6:00 PM, Monday thru Friday.
15. We are in the process of building the case for a national campaign to generate money and resources to put our parish back together again. (We did find out that the flood insurance covers \$50,000 worth of damage).
16. At each Mass, we have sign up sheets for people to give their updated contact information.
17. The leadership team stays in touch day by day.
18. After every 10:30 AM Mass, we feed all people who wish to stay for fellowship.

These are only things that we have responded to since the last few days of August. Each day brings new challenges, yet each day brings new resources and a greater sense of hope that one day we will recapture the full culture and spirit of Our Lady of Lourdes. And yet, these are the things that other parishes are going through; these are the things that, hopefully not, you may have to face one day. We hope your "Disaster Plan" is a good one and that you never have to use it.

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## Let's Work Together to Help Others

There are hundreds of people across the country who have e-mailed or called ISPD wanting to know what they can do to help those in need from Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. You have already given to special collections at your church, or to the Red Cross or to Catholic Charities, plus other key organizations. Many are now asking ISPD to identify churches, schools and people they can directly help.

In response, we have established a section on our website at [www.ISPD.com](http://www.ISPD.com) called "**Hurricane Outreach**". Listed there are the names of specific churches and schools that need your help. We are now back in our office at 110 James Drive West, Suite 215 in St. Rose, LA 70087, where we invite you to send any monetary contributions. **Please make sure all checks are made out to the Catholic institution - and not to ISPD.** At this time, money is needed the most by these churches and schools.

In regards to supplies, Our Lady of Lourdes School is the main school that has listed supplies. There is an address to send directly to them. If you wish to furnish any of the other Catholic institutions with supplies, please contact Frank Donaldson at [ispd@aol.com](mailto:ispd@aol.com) in order to specify what it is you wish to send and where to send it.

ISPD will assure that all money and supplies are personally delivered to the specific churches and schools that are posted on our website. Please check our website regularly for additional institutions, and their situations. We thank you in advance for your generous gifts and prayers for these Catholic institutions that so desperately need your help.

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## UPCOMING FALL WORKSHOPS

Dynamic presenters share proven strategies and discuss development issues during one and two day seminars for Catholic parishes and schools. These workshops are conveniently held across the country at an affordable price of \$49-\$149 We hope you'll join us soon!

**Topics Include:** \*\* Attracting New Students \*\* Total Stewardship \*\*

\*\* Long-Range Planning \*\* Annual Funds & Capital Campaigns \*\*  
\*\* Charge Up Your Development Battery! \*\* Building A Stronger Image \*\*  
\*\* Involving More People in Your Catholic Institution \*\*

**Scheduled Locations:** \*\* Denver, CO \*\* Dubuque, IA \*\* Harrisburg, PA \*\*

\*\* Miami, FL \*\* Newark, NJ \*\* Omaha, NE \*\* Pittsburgh, PA \*\* San Francisco, CA  
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- [Check Here for Details](#)

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