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EarthBeat



A sailboat lies amid debris in the backyard of a destroyed home Sept. 27 in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence in New Bern, N.C. (CNS/Bob Roller)

by Catholic News Service

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The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops requested Oct. 2 that U.S. dioceses take up an emergency collection to help those devastated by Hurricane Florence and any other natural disasters that might occur the rest of the year.

"We offer our prayers to families who have lost loved ones or are among those injured. As is often the case, the poor are the hardest hit by these conditions, but many will have immense unmet needs," Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston said in a recent letter to the nation's bishops. Excerpts from his letter were included in a USCCB news release about the need for this collection.

He urged bishops make this special appeal and that "we each take up the collection as soon as possible so that those most in need can receive assistance quickly."

The cardinal said the staff at the USCCB Office for National Collections in Washington "has been in touch with several bishops to learn about their situations and to offer our prayers and our desire to be of assistance in this time of need."

Funds will be used for "the humanitarian, long-term recovery and church needs arising from these storms," DiNardo said.

Initially, funds will be used to support the efforts of Catholic Charities USA as its staff and volunteers reach out to provide humanitarian aid in the form of water, food, shelter and medical care, as well as the agency's long-term efforts to restore communities after widespread destruction, he explained.

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Also, funds will go to support the USCCB's efforts to assist with pastoral and reconstruction aid to the church, DiNardo said. "Humanitarian funds for any future disasters impacting communities outside the U.S. may be shared with Catholic Relief Services for its response efforts," he added.

"The traditional storm season has only just begun and already we have witnessed the devastating impact of Hurricane Florence in the Carolinas," the cardinal said.

Torrential rainfall and catastrophic flooding due to Florence have severely damaged or destroyed "thousands of homes, businesses, and churches," he said. "Given the patterns of recent years, it is reasonable to expect much more unpredictable

weather and an increasing number of natural disasters."