News

Rescue workers and residents remove a body at the site of a mudslide in Petrópolis, Brazil, Fe

Rescue workers and residents remove a body at the site of a mudslide in Petrópolis, Brazil, Feb. 16, 2022. (CNS photo/Ricardo Moraes, Reuters)



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February 17, 2022

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SÃO PAULO — The Diocese of Petrópolis and the city's parishes have opened their doors to assist victims of the torrential rainstorm that flooded the historic city of Petrópolis.

Bishop Gregório Paixão Neto asked that priests and parishioners take in people whose houses were affected by the Feb. 15 mudslides and needed shelter.

"This moment is one of solidarity, and we of the Catholic Church are deeply united and in solidarity with all families," Bishop Paixão said in a video message released on social media.

"I ask you to welcome your relatives, your friends and those who are in despair, looking for a place to stay. I, myself, already have a family staying in my house," he added.

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The mid-February storm is considered one of the worst in city in the past 70 years, with rainfall surpassing 10 inches in six hours, a volume greater than expected for the entire month of February. As of early Feb. 17, 104 deaths had been recorded, and dozens were still missing under the mud and rubble.

The Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro, through Caritas, launched the SOS Petrópolis campaign, asking for donations for families affected by the rains.

"Sons and daughters, I ask that in this moment of extreme need of our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Petrópolis, our charity and prayers can help them quickly," Cardinal Orani Tempesta wrote on his social media networks.

The Brazilian bishops' conference said the disaster "touches our Christian faith, impelling us to act in solidarity. Let us unite ourselves in communion with Bishop Gregório Paixão and with the beloved people of God in the Diocese of Petrópolis. Our prayers take the name of every brother and sister, victims of this tragedy, to the heart of Jesus."

Petrópolis, located in the mountainous region just outside Rio de Janeiro, was used as a summer residence for Emperor Pedro II until 1889, when Brazil became a republic.