News
EarthBeat



A man walks on the dirt and sand foundation of Harbor Road in Stony Brook, N.Y., Aug. 19, 2024, after it collapsed earlier in the day when torrential rain caused a dam beneath the road to burst. The storm unleashed flash floods in parts of Long Island, N.Y., and southwestern Connecticut, where two women were found dead after they were swept away from their vehicles. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

Gina Christian

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Oxford, Connecticut — August 22, 2024
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Catholics in Connecticut are working to help those impacted by what one lawmaker described as "historic, unprecedented flooding" Aug. 18-19 that took two lives and forced hundreds to flee for safety.

The southwestern part of the state was deluged by 6-10 inches of rainfall in as many hours Aug. 18, with more rain pummeling the region the following day.

At an Aug. 19 news conference, Brenda Bergeron, deputy commissioner of Connecticut's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security said the rainfall totals in some areas were at the "1,000-year level" high.

Two women in the town of Oxford drowned as rescuers tried to save them. Hundreds of residents were evacuated, with roads and infrastructure in the area devastated. Gov. Ned Lamont declared a state of emergency Aug. 19.

A volunteer staffer at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Oxford told OSV News that while the church buildings were intact, "a lot of people here" in the parish "did get hit" by the flooding.

The parish is "having 300 cases of water delivered to the church on Friday (Aug. 23), and the town hall is going to spread the word that we have water available for people," the staffer said.

In the meantime, "all activities are canceled for this week" except for Masses, funerals and a scheduled blood drive, said the staffer.

In Seymour, which also saw a tremendous amount of destruction, particularly to public infrastructure and area businesses, the storm's full impact is still being assessed, said Father Thomas Cieslikowski, pastor of St. Nicholas Parish.

The priest told OSV News the parish's two churches "are on high ground" and did not sustain any damage.

However, "one of the two bridges in town are washed out," and "a couple of my parishioners who live in (Oxford) have been cut off," he said. "They can't make it out of their houses. It's that bad. ... I was supposed to have a meeting today, and one of the people that was running the meeting can't get out of his house."

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Catholic parishes on Long Island, New York, were also battling similar flooding, as storms hammered various communities and mangled roads, rail lines and homes.

On its Facebook page, St. Thomas the Apostle invited those affected to contact the parish for help. The post included a prayer Aug. 18 for flood victims and those aiding them, a text the parish noted had been adapted from a similar supplication during Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 storm that proved to be one of the five deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history.

"Lord, please be with our rescue workers and keep them safe as they make heroic efforts in dangerous situations to rescue those in trouble. Lord, please be with everyone waiting to be rescued, keep them safe, and bring help to them soon," read the prayer. "God, bless each and every person affected by this storm and surround them with Your love, protection, and angels. Let them know that we are here praying for them and their loved ones. We give You all the praise and glory forever, Lord, and know that even in the darkest hours, You are always with us. Amen."