News
EarthBeat
Marie Cook reacts to the damage to her home in Wellington, Fla., Oct. 10, 2024, after a torna

Marie Cook reacts to the damage to her home in Wellington, Fla., Oct. 10, 2024, after a tornado formed by Hurricane Milton touched down striking homes in the neighborhood and surrounding area. (OSV News photo/Bill Ingram/Palm Beach Post/USA Today Network via Reuters)

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Alexandria, Va. — October 10, 2024
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Editor's Note: *This article was updated with additional reporting on Hurricane Milton and its aftermath.*

As Hurricane Milton took aim at Florida just days after Hurricane Helene, Catholic Charities USA launched a dedicated disaster relief donation campaign.

CCUSA -- the official domestic relief agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S. and a member of Caritas Internationalis, the church's global network of humanitarian outreaches -- announced the fund Oct. 9, as Milton churned across the Gulf of Mexico toward Florida with maximum sustained winds of 130 miles per hour.

The hurricane fluctuated in intensity and was a Category 4 by midday Oct. 9, but it made landfall as a powerful Category 3 storm at 8:30 p.m. (EST) Oct. 10 near Siesta Key, Florida, a barrier island next to Sarasota, bringing heavy rain, strong winds and powerful storm surges.

Milton flooded neighborhoods, destroyed homes and ripped the roof off Tropicana Field, home stadium for the Tampa Bay Rays baseball team. The field had been set up to shelter first responders. More than 3.3 million in the state were without power early Oct. 10, and early reports said at least four people had died.

AP reported that ahead of Milton's landfall, more than 130 tornado warnings associated with the storm were issued by National Weather Services offices in Florida.

Donations to the CCUSA relief fund can be made on the agency's website at ccusa.online/milton; by texting MILTON to 20406; or by mailing checks to CCUSA at 2050 Ballenger Ave, Suite 400, Alexandria, Virginia, 22314. Information about additional ways to give can be obtained by contacting CCUSA at (800) 919-9338 or donations@catholiccharitiesusa.org.



Broken utility poles downed by strong wind gusts are seen as Hurricane Milton approaches Fort Myers, Fla., Oct. 9, 2024. As Hurricane Milton bears down on Florida just days after Hurricane Helene, Catholic Charities USA announced Oct. 9 that it has launched a dedicated disaster relief donation campaign at ccusa.online/milton, with 100% of all funds raised to be allocated to local Catholic Charities agencies. (OSV News/Ricardo Arduengo, Reuters)

Milton hit Florida as the region is still struggling to recover from Hurricane Helene, which killed at least 227 across six states in September.

The National Hurricane Center reported that Milton weakened to a Category 1 storm as it swept through the state "and moved offshore."

President Joe Biden — who approved requests for federal emergency declarations from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Marcellus W. Osceola Jr., chair of the Seminole Tribe of Florida — canceled his upcoming trips to Germany and Angola due to the expected impact of the hurricane. Following a briefing, Biden said Milton "is looking like the storm of the century," urging residents to evacuate as "literally a matter of life and death."

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In its Oct. 9 announcement, CCUSA said that "one hundred percent of all funds raised will be allocated to local Catholic Charities agencies, which will provide critical relief — including shelter, food and other humanitarian aid — to displaced and suffering members of their communities."

"Our brothers and sisters urgently need our prayers and our support as Hurricane Milton brings life-threatening conditions to Florida communities, some of which are still reeling from Hurricane Helene," CCUSA president and CEO Kerry Alys Robinson said.

So far, CCUSA has distributed more than $1.9 million to Catholic Charities agencies in states affected by Hurricane Helene, and the agency said it "will stand by these communities through the long-term recovery.

The agency said it responds to more than 60 disasters every year, ranging from hurricanes and tornadoes to fires and floods.