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Vignettes of Hurricane Sandy from a sister in New York

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NCR Today

Hurricane Sandy

A week ago, before Hurricane Sandy was forecasted, my cousin Marie confided to her brother in Florida that she wasn't afraid of dying, but of living. Marie, in her mid 60s, has been confined to a wheelchair and dependent on oxygen since heart surgery six years ago.

On Monday, Sandy took out her power and poured five feet of water into her basement apartment. She and her husband were able to escape to the upstairs apartment, where their daughter's family lives. It's crowded, but the children love their grandparents.

The financial burden is enormous, especially because Marie's son-in-law has been out of work for several months. At least he'll be able to help clear away the furniture and other possessions destroyed by the flood. And Marie's brother plans to come from Florida to lend a hand. Compared to other tragedies, Marie's loss doesn't seem cataclysmic, but it's enough to increase her fear of living.

Our convent in Glendale, Queens, N.Y., escaped Sandy's wrath. We didn't lose power and our basement is dry. All that was damaged was our backyard. Much of the fence separating it from the schoolyard is gone, and a large metal tool chest was blown apart and its contents scattered.

A different kind of disaster landed on our front door this morning in the form of a young man who introduced himself as Michael, an electrician, whose van was destroyed. He said he needed money for car service to Long Island. He was short \$15, he said.

I looked at him, unsure of the truth of his story. In the back of my mind was the echo of my mother's

voice from when I was a child of 6. There was a beggar at our door then, and my father thought he was a con artist. My mother said, "Now, Lou, if he's lying, it's on his conscience. If I send him away, truly hungry, it's on mine."

She fed that man. I gave this one \$20 and a slip of paper with our address so he could pay us back when able to do so.

On Sept. 4, I visited a good friend, a wonderful priest who has recently returned from a year of psychological healing. He's living in what was his parents' home in Breezy Point, a few blocks from the ocean, and though he is retired, he is happy to help out in the local parishes.

Today's news is of the devastation in that beach property, including a fire that destroyed 15 homes. The power is out in that whole area, and at this moment, I am one with the thousands who worry and wonder about the fate of those they care about.

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