

# Gratitude and stewardship



Archbishop  
Gregory M.  
**AYMOND**

**A**s you reflect on the expectation of receiving approximately \$170 million in FEMA reimbursements to rebuild schools and community centers across the archdiocese, what are your thoughts?

We're still experiencing the extreme destruction of Katrina, but I'm grateful to so many people who have come to our aid. I'm grateful to them and to God. FEMA has helped us tremendously. Two words come to mind: gratitude and stewardship. We are grateful for the monies, and we want to be good stewards. We owe a special debt of gratitude to

Sen. Landrieu and the entire Louisiana Congressional delegation for successfully pushing through legislation eliminating a provision that would have reduced by 25 percent the amount of FEMA funds that were available for alternate projects. Their efforts allowed us to do even more for our Catholic school system. Rep. Cao also has been most helpful in follow through and with many other aspects of FEMA.

**How extensive was the process of evaluating the damages from Katrina and deciding which schools to reopen?**

We consulted with individual pastors and principals, and on the archdiocesan level, the Office of Catholic Schools surveyed the needs of all the schools after Katrina in conjunction with the Building Office. We also discussed the plan with the Finance Council, the Administrative Council, the Council of Deans and the Property Management Office. We did a detailed study to establish priorities for the Catholic school system. As with almost any plan, there were more needs and priorities than there were available FEMA funds. Then came the moral dilemma of how to utilize the FEMA funds as best as is humanly

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possible. Through prayer, consultation and reflection, we believe we've done that. We are keenly aware that there is no such thing as a perfect plan or pure justice, but we believe we can stand before God and say our proposal represents good stewardship. We wish we had more resources with which to work. Any plan has strengths and weaknesses, and we believe this plan has far more strengths than weaknesses.

**Some people might have a difficult time understanding how money allocated by FEMA for a closed school in Orleans Parish might be used to build the new Academy of Our Lady in Marrero.**

FEMA regulations are very specific: If a school, for example, is more than 50 percent damaged, FEMA either will pay to replace the school on its same footprint or the money for that project could be reallocated for an eligible "alternate" project. Once we decided after Katrina not to reopen certain schools because of the shift in population, we then had two choices – use the FEMA funds on eligible "alternate" projects

or forego the money. We would not be responsible stewards if we did not do everything we could to strengthen the overall Catholic educational system, and therefore we decided to use some of the FEMA funds on alternate projects. Also, Archbishop Hughes made the commitment after much consultation to build a new campus for the Academy of Our Lady in Marrero; I want to faithfully carry out that promise. The new campus in Marrero will strengthen Catholic education on the West Bank.

**What are your thoughts about those who still feel upset over the loss of their parish or school?**

In presenting our FEMA proposal publicly we haven't forgotten about those whose parishes, schools and other Catholic institutions have been closed either because of Katrina or as a result of the pastoral plan. I'm sensitive to their feelings of loss, which sometimes understandably can turn into anger. I'm willing to meet with them and walk with them on the journey.

**Where does the archdiocese stand from a bricks-and-mortar standpoint 4 1/2 years after Katrina?**

We stand in a humble and grateful position that some of

our underinsured properties have been rebuilt and updated. As for the future of our vacant properties – and there are a lot of them – that's a decision I haven't prayed about yet. We have begun preliminary discussions on some of the properties, but I can very honestly and straightforwardly say there is no comprehensive plan as yet. We have said since the storm that we are looking to find uses for the properties, first within the ministries of the church and secondly within related ministries. If we can't do that, then we would look to the secular market.

**Even though FEMA extended its deadline into next year for entities to declare their intention to use reimbursements for "alternate" projects, you decided to get this information out early. Why?**

We preferred to keep to the original deadline (of Dec. 31, 2009) for those projects because the sooner we can make our proposals, the sooner we should be able to have access to the money and move on with our plans. We didn't want to cause an undue delay for our children.

*Archbishop Aymond can be contacted at [clarionherald@clarionherald.org](mailto:clarionherald@clarionherald.org).*

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**ARCHBISHOP GREGORY M. AYMOND**  
Publisher and President

**MSGR. CROSBY W. KERN**  
Moderator

**PETER P. FINNEY JR.**  
Executive Editor and General Manager  
OFFICE  
1000 Howard Ave. • Suite 400  
New Orleans, LA 70113

MAIL  
P.O. Box 53247 • New Orleans, LA 70153  
504-596-3035 • FAX: 504-596-3020

General E-Mail:  
[clarionherald@clarionherald.org](mailto:clarionherald@clarionherald.org)  
[www.clarionherald.org](http://www.clarionherald.org)

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## Abp. Hannan's 70th anniversary is a classic memory



Peter  
**FINNEY JR**  
CLARION HERALD

I hope to make it to 70. And then there is former Archbishop Philip Matthew Hannan, who on Dec. 8 – the Feast of the Immaculate Conception – celebrated 70 years as a priest.

The amazing archbishop, now 96, celebrated his landmark anniversary with a simple Mass at St. Louis Cathedral, celebrated by Archbishop Gregory Aymond and attended by his younger brother Jerry and dozens of his closest friends.

Dec. 8, 1939, was a far different experience for the young seminarian from the Archdio-

cese of Baltimore-Washington. He was ordained with 12 U.S. classmates in the chapel of North American College in Rome.

Because of the gathering storm of WWII, none of the seminarians' families could attend the ordination.

"The only one who was there was a woman from the U.S. who was living in Rome," Archbishop Hannan said. "We used to call her 'the abbess' because she came to every Mass and function at the seminary. After we were ordained, the big thing was to meet the other seminarians in the courtyard, where they knelt to receive our first blessing. Then we gave them a cigarette. That was it."

Not quite. That was just the beginning.

A sacred life of incredible fulfillment and boundless energy has touched thousands of

lives. As Archbishop Aymond cogently pointed out with a twinkle in his eye in remarks after Communion, "I am very happy to be the 14th Archbishop of New Orleans, but let me assure you, whenever anyone says 'The' Archbishop of New Orleans, it is Philip Hannan, and we love you very, very much. As we are aware, at 96, he will outlive all of us."

Later, at a luncheon thrown for him by Clara Cvitanovich at Drago's Restaurant in Metairie, Kitty Cleveland brought down the house with her rendition of "O, Danny Boy," the archbishop's favorite song.

Kent Bossier, who cares for the archbishop around the clock, spoke from the heart. Just a few weeks ago, Bossier thought the archbishop might have completed his life's work after he sustained a stroke.

But, true to form, the archbishop rallied, and he's back

scaling the courthouse steps in Covington for exercise. He's attended every Saints' home game since then in Tom Benson's suite. And, he plans to be in Miami when the Saints win the Super Bowl.

"We love you, Archbishop Hannan," Bossier said. "I love you like a son loves a father."

"I told him in 1995 on a plane ride home from Europe that he had to write down the story of his life," Cvitanovich said. "He told me, 'Look, I've got five good years left. I need to do a few things for two more years, and then I'll get around to it.'"

His book, finally, will be out in the spring. He wanted to call it, "Up Until Now."

Classic Philip Hannan – a life with no period.

"Everything I forget, I'll put in my next book," he said.

*Peter Finney Jr. can be reached at [pfinney@clarionherald.org](mailto:pfinney@clarionherald.org).*