

# Earthquake in Haiti requires our prayers, resources



Archbishop  
Gregory M.  
**AYMOND**

**So much has happened this week with the devastating earthquake in Haiti. What will the Catholic Church's response be?**

Churches throughout the United States will be taking up second collections. In the archdiocese, we have asked churches to take up a second collection either last weekend or this weekend. All the funds we collect will be donated to Catholic Relief Services, which is our international humanitarian aid and relief organization.

**People in this area understand the extent to which the world came to our aid after Katrina.**

Certainly, the people of the Archdiocese of New Orleans can empathize with the people of Haiti because we faced the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina. Still very much etched in our minds is the prayerful support we received, as well as the rebuilding assistance and financial support that came to us. It's because of that spiritual and material support that we were able to re-establish ourselves in the last 4 1/2 years. This is a privileged opportunity for us to reciprocate that love to our sisters and brothers in Haiti. Thousands have died. Many died in the cathedral in Port au Prince as they were finding a place of refuge. Seminarians who were inside the cathedral were killed. The archbishop was killed. Schools collapsed, so all of the children in those buildings were killed. It's important for us to pray for those whose lives have been lost. For those who survived, this will be an incredible time of grief. We need to pray for those who will be given the task to rebuild their own personal lives. We want to hold close in our hearts

**On the Web:**  
[www.arch-no.org](http://www.arch-no.org)

the Haitians living here in the Archdiocese of New Orleans and their families. I want to thank those who have already given financially and those who will give financially as a sign of our faith-filled solidarity with our suffering sisters and brothers. This would be a tragedy anywhere, but it is even more devastating in a country with so few resources.

**Have you ever been to Haiti?**

I have. I was there when I was director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the Pontifical Mission Societies. It's the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The poverty is just incredible. During my stay there I commented to people that I had never seen poverty like that before. I had never seen such a broken educational system and so few educational opportunities for kids. On that trip we brought supplies and gifts from the Catholic schools in the arch-

diocese to the people of Haiti. **At times of natural disasters, some people ask whether or not this was some form of punishment from God.**

People ask, where was God or why did God send this kind of tragedy? God does not send these kinds of disasters. God does allow nature to take its course. Unfortunately, as the earth shifts and as layers of rock move, that causes earthquakes. God does not send earthquakes or suffering to his people. At the same time, he promises to be with us in times of tragedy. An evangelist said this was happening in Haiti because they had made a pact with the devil a long time ago. That kind of misunderstanding of theology and spirituality is not a very compassionate or faith-filled response to give to people who are trying to survive.

**Will the archdiocese send people to help with the relief efforts?**

I've been in touch with Catholic Relief Services. We will support their work financially, and if there is a need for people

to help with the relief work, I certainly would want the archdiocese to be included in those efforts and offer that opportunity to people throughout the archdiocese.

**On another matter, the U.S. Senate and House are in conference committee on the health care bill. What are your concerns?**

The USCCB staff, along with several bishops, continue to be in dialogue with members of Congress. I am asking Catholics in the Archdiocese of New Orleans to pray for the enlightenment of our legislators and to contact their senators and representatives to reiterate our concerns. We do not believe that public funds should be used for abortions. Also, at this point we don't believe there is a sufficient conscience clause in the bill, and we want to make sure health care is accessible and affordable for all, including immigrants. Please join me in prayer for "just" health care reform.

Send questions to Archbishop Aymond at [clarionherald@clarionherald.org](mailto:clarionherald@clarionherald.org).

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## Pro-lifers need to reach out to African Americans



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**FINNEY JR**  
CLARION HERALD

It is easy to slip into a scoreboard mentality when analyzing the effectiveness of the pro-life movement.

There are the obvious victories, as attorney Dorinda Bordlee, vice president of the Bioethics Defense Fund, so eloquently reported last week upon being honored at the Proudly Pro-Life Dinner for her legal efforts in defense of life.

In 1995 – coincidentally the first year Bordlee began her withering 24/7 legal duel with the culture of death – a Gallup Poll asking Americans to identify themselves as either “pro-choice” or “pro-life” reported a 56-33 percentage split in favor of the “pro-choice” message. Fourteen years later, the most recent Gallup poll has flipped: 51 percent of Americans now consider themselves pro-life and only 42 percent pro-choice. “This is Exhibit A,” Bordlee

said. “To come from negative 23 to up 9 percent is phenomenal. We are on the winning side of history.”

“How do we know we’re winning?” Bordlee continued. “Because the policies of (the Obama administration) have to be hidden. (The president) says there won’t be abortion funding in health care, and we know it’s in there because we can read the bill. If they were winning, they wouldn’t have to hide, right?”

The Obama presidency has created the teachable moment of a lifetime for Josephite Father John Raphael, president of St. Augustine High School.

Father Raphael, a St. Augustine graduate who went on to the University of Notre Dame for his undergrad work, found himself in the national spotlight last May when Notre Dame invited Obama to give the commencement speech and then presented him with an honorary doctorate.

Father Raphael was a main speaker at an alternative commencement for students disturbed that the nation’s top Catholic university would honor a pro-abortion president. Put yourself in Father Raphael’s shoes. He is principal at a proudly African-American boys’ high school, and the election of the first black president in U.S. history was a seminal moment for a people who were enslaved 150 years ago and live today with the effects of racism.

“When I was a child, I was told that I could grow up to become president one day, and I believed it – just like I believed in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy and everything else that belongs to childhood aspirations and imagination,” Father Raphael said.

Father Raphael “showered” students, faculty and parents “with current abortion statistics, parallels between slavery and abortion, and comparisons between black deaths by abortion and black deaths by other causes.” It did not matter.

The Notre Dame controversy further marginalized Father Raphael with his students because “if it’s OK with Notre Dame, then it must be OK with the rest of the church.”

Father Raphael said African Americans do not disagree on the truth of life, but there is a chasm “of fundamental misunderstanding and distrust” that

the pro-life community needs to work much harder to bridge.

“The pro-life movement should speak to the black community first about their own fight for justice and equality and then invite members of that community to engage in a dialogue which includes the undeniable racism that marks the strategies and policies of past and present pro-abortion advocates,” Father Raphael said.

While blacks make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, they account for 37 percent of abortions. Planned Parenthood “has a decades-old agenda of reducing minority populations, hence the placement of its clinics in black and Hispanic neighborhoods,” he said.

“Should this (understanding) take place, blacks won’t have to vote Republican in order to vote pro-life,” he said. “They will vote out of conviction for the sanctity of black life, which they will then see as being under direct attack. That conviction will be communicated loudly and clearly to the politicians who represent them, regardless of party doctrine.”

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