



Office of the President

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Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
President

April 28, 2015

Your Eminence/Excellency:

A 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal in the late morning of April 25 just 50 miles northwest of the capital, Kathmandu, toppling buildings and homes, causing widespread panic, and claiming more than 3,900 lives. The devastation and toll on human life is still becoming clear as rescue workers access the affected areas and people.

Our Church mourns the terrible suffering of our brothers and sisters affected by this powerful earthquake. The earthquake struck the Kathmandu valley, which is densely populated with nearly 2.5 million people. Tens of thousands of families are sleeping outside in Kathmandu and require shelter and protection from the cold and relentless rain, which has worsened conditions. Aftershocks continue—one reaching 6.7 magnitude and another 5.4 magnitude—increasing fear, causing further damage to buildings, and interrupting rescue operations. Most markets in Kathmandu are closed. People urgently need basic essentials. Shelter, blankets, safe water, food, medical care, hygiene and counseling are priorities. Hygiene and sanitation are critical to preventing waterborne diseases.



Damage in Swatha Square in Kathmandu. Photo courtesy of Edyta Stepczak

To this end, I request that you encourage your pastors to take up a second collection for our affected brothers and sisters as soon as possible. I make this request following on consultation with Archbishop Paul Coakley, Chairman of the Board of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Archbishop Dennis Schnurr, Chairman of our Committee on National Collections. These funds will be used to support the efforts of CRS (our official international humanitarian agency) as we respond to immediate emergency needs for such necessities as water, food, shelter and medical care as well as the long-term needs to rebuild the communities in the regions affected after widespread destruction.

Catholic Relief Services has already begun to embark on a major emergency response to this severe disaster and has committed funds to extended relief efforts. CRS is providing 10,000 families (50,000 people) with emergency shelter materials, blankets, water treatment and hygiene kits. Given the scale of the disaster, the agency expects to expand relief activities to additional families. CRS is working with Caritas Nepal to identify the most pressing needs in the hardest hit districts between Kathmandu and Pokhara, and will scale our operations accordingly.

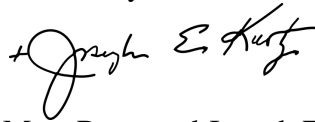
Your help and the help of the Catholic community of the United States are urgently needed. Checks from the collection can be sent to CRS, P.O. Box 17090, Baltimore, MD 21297-0303 (“Nepal Earthquake” in memo line). Additional information on the U.S. Catholic

community's response to this emergency and how U.S. Catholics can help can be found at www.crs.org and www.usccb.org. In case you find it helpful, I have also attached to this correspondence sample parish announcement concerning the collection and an update from CRS on the relief efforts to date.

I take this occasion also to convey to you the attached copy of a letter of fraternal solidarity that I sent this week to Most Reverend Paul Simick, Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate Apostolic of Nepal, to express our sorrow at the devastating tragedy and our promise of prayerful support.

With assurances of my sincere gratitude for your generous and timely response to the great needs we now face, I am

Fraternally in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph E. Kurtz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "K".

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.

Archbishop of Louisville

President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops