



DIOCESE OF FRESNO  
PASTORAL CENTER

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My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Words cannot adequately express the sorrow and sadness I feel in response to the back-to-back tragedies that have struck Mexico, the Caribbean, Texas, and Florida these last couple of weeks. The immense loss of human life and the destruction of whole cities and island counties are hard to imagine or emotionally comprehend. Yet a few words do come to mind:

**WHY?** In the face of overwhelming tragedy, it is a human question that begs an answer. But no satisfactory answer is available. Science can offer some technical explanations, history can offer others. We can turn to decisions made by urban planners and government agencies. These are partial glimpses to an answer. Religion can also be of great help. But, answers rooted in religious terms not founded on genuine faith can be not only unsatisfactory; they can also be harmful. Our **FAITH** is rooted not in easy answers or clever twists of vocabulary, but in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. The most important word Jesus brings to us in times such as these is **HOPE**. Our message, then, must be a message of hope which transcends even the darkest of days and the shadows of death.

Finally, knowing that “why” may be an unsatisfactory question, we are filled with even greater faith, strengthened by our hope in Jesus, which leads us to **LOVE** – the outpouring of action on behalf of those who suffer from the natural happenings and events of life, no matter how tragic. Once the initial shock settles, out of compassion and love for those who are our brothers and sisters, we can see in them the face of Christ, the Lord and in their loss a share in the Cross. It is from this foundation that I invite all of you to join our efforts to assist those in need through a second collection, the date of which is to be determined by the pastors/administrators in our parishes. **I encourage your generous gifts to be made payable to your parish, and in the memo section of your check write, “Hurricane and Earthquake Relief Appeal.”** The parish in turn will send one check to the Diocese of Fresno which will then send the proceeds directly to the bishop of the dioceses in most serious need.

Let us remember the victims and their loved ones in our prayers and to beg our gracious Lord for long-term relief from pain and suffering for all those experiencing the effects of conflicts and natural disasters.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Armando X. Ochoa, D.D.  
Bishop, Diocese of Fresno