



OFFICE *of the* BISHOP

August 24, 2020

Derecho & Beirut Disaster Relief

Dear Friends in Christ,

On August 10, 2020, a straight-line windstorm, called a derecho, hit Iowa with hurricane-force winds. The storm caused severe damage to crops, businesses, and homes. Tens of thousands of individuals and families, more than a week afterwards, are still without power, assessing damages, and removing debris from their properties.

Six of the 23 counties within the Diocese of Des Moines are part of Governor Kim Reynolds' Proclamation of Disaster Emergency including Audubon, Cass, Dallas, Guthrie, Madison, and Polk. Out of these six counties, Polk and Dallas counties have been declared Federal Disaster Areas. The recovery process it expected to be lengthy and costly.

The Diocese of Des Moines is working with our local Catholic Charities to help the individuals and families most severely affected by the derecho. A Derecho Relief Fund has been established for this work of mercy. If you are able to help, your donation will provide direct relief to those in most need. If our collective generosity meets the scope of need in the Diocese of Des Moines, we will be contacting neighboring dioceses with significant damage such as the Archdiocese of Dubuque and the Diocese of Davenport to share these relief funds. We are in the process of exploring a further collaboration with the three other dioceses in Iowa to provide statewide assistance to all the affected peoples and areas.

In addition to the foregoing, our Church mourns the terrible suffering of those impacted by the tragic explosion in Beirut, Lebanon that killed so many without warning in early August, 2020. 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate detonated at the city's port resulting in the deaths of at least 160 people. Thousands of people remain injured or homeless and the scope of suffering has only begun to be grasped. We have been asked by the bishops of the United States to offer a response of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and advocacy.



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In response to these local and global disasters, I ask that a special collection be taken up at our parishes the weekend of August 29-30. Donations can be made directly to the Diocese with the notation they are for Beirut disaster relief and/or derecho disaster relief. Gifts can also be made online dmdiocese.org/giving. Contributions to disaster relief efforts in Beirut will be sent to Catholic Relief Services.

May the God who is never outdone in generosity bless you as you reach out to those in need – locally and globally.

Faithfully in Christ,



Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines