

September 9, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As I write this, the Church in the Americas—North and South—celebrates the feast of St. Peter Claver, a 17th century Jesuit priest, who spent his entire religious life ministering to the slaves arriving in the port of Cartagena, Columbia, from West Africa. Providing what medicine, food and clothing he could acquire, he sought to restore human dignity to men, women and children living in the most inhumane of conditions. In our Gospel reading for today’s Mass, Jesus says to his disciples (and to us), “*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful*” (LUKE 6:36).

St. Peter Claver could not end the slave trade by himself, but it *was* within his potential—as it is in *ours*—to perform small acts of mercy with love for those in great need.

The remnants of Hurricane Ida impacted thousands of our neighbors in Middlesex and Somerset Counties. The number of those who died in the flash flooding is certainly the most tragic aspect of Ida, but the loss of a home, business or livelihood is a devastating reality with which to live. In response to the directive of Our Lord, in the spirit of St. Peter Claver, we can minister to the victims of Hurricane Ida—and the victims of other natural disasters in the future. Bishop Checchio has established a diocesan Emergency Disaster Relief Fund, the purpose of which is “to support the efforts of Catholic agencies as they work to aid emergency relief efforts locally and nationally ... [providing] immediate emergency needs, such as water, food, shelter, and medical care, and to aid in long-term rebuilding and recovery efforts.”

You can make a direct donation to the Emergency Disaster Relief Fund at <https://diometuchen.org/disasterfund> or through the special collection that will taken up at our parish Masses the weekend of September 18-19.

St. Mary’s has always shown itself to be a most generous parish to those in need, so I thank you in advance for your generosity.

As Bishop Checchio has written, “may Our Lady of Guadalupe, through whom our diocese was consecrated, continue to protect us under her mantle and intercede for all those affected, lovingly caring for us as a mother does her children.”

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. William Benwell
Pastor