

Dear my family of Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church, Laplace.

It is with great joy that at last I am able to connect with you and update you on the damages from Hurricane Ida. I am sorry for the possible anxiety arising from my silence. As you are aware, the phones and internet in LaPlace have not been working. Even when the system was finally rectified, it is on and off. I receive messages but cannot reply. Today I had to travel to New Orleans, thanks to Fr. Jonathan, Pastor of Our Lady of the Rosary, who has been kind to let me use his internet so as to reach you all. Besides the phone and internet, the rectory had a hard hit. I equally received a serious beating from Ida on that Sunday night. After trying for several hours to save as much items as possible in the house from the leaking roof, I gave up after seeing part of the wall of the visitor's room give way and the part of the ceiling in the living room and dining come down. That is when I realized things were getting extremely bad. I said my Act of Contrition and surrendered. But that is a story for another day.

On the night of August 29, 2021 our parish took a hard hit from hurricane Ida. A lot of Church property has been damaged. Below is a brief summary of the property damaged.

The Church:

The damage is more extensive than I had earlier communicated to my staff members. Four or more iron sheets on the roof above the sanctuary were ripped off. We are currently experiencing a lot of leaking in the sanctuary from subsequent rains.

A number of glass sheets around the cupola were shattered. Since the force was from outside, they fell inside cutting through the pew cushions and in some cases piercing and getting stuck in the wooded part of the pews. Many pews have been affected. These now pose a grave danger as it is hard to tell which pews have pieces of glass inside the cushions and which ones are safe. Because of the shattered glass sheets, the storm blew inside and many pews are soaked.

Finally, one of the doors on the southern side was damaged but not ripped off.

The Rectory:

The rectory has been greatly damaged. Many shingles were blown off. Part of the wall on the eastern side was compromised. The sheetrock gave way. The water entered and destroyed everything in the visitors' bedroom. The ceiling below it also took on a lot of water and came down this morning. The top part of the chimney next to the living room on the eastern side of the wall was damaged. As a result, the ceiling took on a lot of water and part of it came down. Some of the things in the sitting room were damaged. The carport was ripped off and thrown in the compound. The fence on the eastern and

southern side was destroyed. The AC unit was blown off its stand.

Piovan Hall.

Thank to God Piovan Hall was not badly damaged. It is my place of refuge at the moment. Some of the shingles were blown off creating a leakage that brought down the ceiling in the hallway. Parts of the wall on the northern and eastern sides were also damaged.

Administration block (Parish Office):

Some of the shingles were blown off. Water entered possibly under the door and window and damaged the carpet. The whole fence around the office was blown off.

The Workshop:

The roof of the building in which the maintenance equipment is kept was ripped off. I am not certain whether the equipment is compromised or not.

The School.

The school has damages too. The hallway and Don Bosco Hall took on water. There were also damages externally. Part of the ceiling came down. But it is not in a worrying state.

This is a hard time for all of us, but the Lord will see us all through it. It is during such trying moments that the best in humanity comes out and our faith strengthened. It is going to be a long and hard time of reconstruction as many of the parishioners had their houses flooded or roofs compromised. However, I have no doubt we are going to come back stronger. We won't be discouraged. Remember the words of Jesus to Jairus: *"Do not be afraid, just have faith"* Mk 5:36.

In fact things are already improving. The phones are working although they are on and off. Water is back but the pressure is still low. It was a nice feeling having a good shower today. I am trying to clean up the place. Ray Riviere, his father and his sister joined yesterday to work. Ray put a tarpaulin on the rectory to secure the compromised part. I thank the couple, our parishioners, who live just a few blocks away from me, who gave me a blue tarpaulin. Steve Hernandez joined me today for clean up. Mike Abbate came back today and is likely to join me tomorrow.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Cyril M. Buyeera

Pastor