News
EarthBeat
Scattered debris and houses with missing roofs are seen in a drone photograph July 2, 2024, a

Scattered debris and houses with missing roofs are seen in a drone photograph July 2, 2024, after Hurricane Beryl passed the island of Petite Martinique, Grenada. (OSV News/Reuters/Arthur Daniel)

Tom Tracy

View Author Profile


OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Miami — July 8, 2024
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In his first public address since Hurricane Beryl visited the Caribbean's Lesser Antilles region as the earliest formed Category 5 hurricane on record, the bishop of St. George's in Grenada took to social media to offer a spiritual message of hope and resilience following the July 1 landfall there.

Beryl was the second named storm of the 2024 hurricane season and had major impacts on Jamaica and the Cayman Islands as it headed to Mexico before making an expected landfall in the United States.

Early reports were that the islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, which are part of Grenada, may have taken the brunt of the destruction in that diocese, along with parts of Grenada, which remained isolated due to poor communications as of July 4

according to Bishop Clyde Martin Harvey of St. George's.

The Trinidad-born Harvey spoke July 4 about the spiritual and material impacts of the first major hurricane to so heavily impact this area since 2004's Hurricane Ivan.

"After the storm, I would like to invite you to go through the whole series of feelings you had and acknowledge and claim them; part of you died in that storm, but thanks be to God few of us are able to say a relative died," the bishop said, noting the spiritual implications of enduring Beryl.

He hosted a live call-in program broadcast July 4 through YouTube and Facebook during which his diocesan radio and TV ministry displayed early pictures showing sometimes severe damages to church and other properties from around the diocese, as well as taking phone calls from local clergy and parishioners reporting on their experience with Beryl.

Advertisement

The bishop addressed the fears that parishioners and clergy alike would have experienced during the hurricane landfall.

"Part of you felt the tension of hearing the tiles in church rattling, symbolizing the tensions in the foundations of the church. Think of your own tensions as you experienced the storm," he said. "Beyond the tensions, moments of anxiety and hope together."

"My own experience of the storm was one in which I felt a bunch of hyenas circling the house, trying to get in. And when that stopped for a while I was afraid … to go out. I wasn’t sure what was outside that door, but in that stillness a glimmer of hope emerged that perhaps we were safe."

Harvey noted that there was much to be grateful for due to the widespread preparations that were made to reduce the loss of life during Beryl, and he urged parishes and Caritas staff to work together in seeking out those who need immediate assistance and provisions.

Speaking through the diocese's Good News Catholic Communications program, Harvey noted that a local Youth Emergency Action Committee had been setting up a

presence in many parishes in order to help form a response effort.

Meanwhile, press reports indicated that government officials were working to set up a field hospital on the island of Carriacou, whose one permanent hospital lost most of its roof to the hurricane. Two deaths were confirmed there, and the island remained without power.
Moreover, the country's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell recently spoke of total devastation to Carriacou and some of the nearby settlements of the Grenadines.

Scattered debris is seen July 2, 2024, after Hurricane Beryl passed the island of Petite Martini

Scattered debris is seen July 2, 2024, after Hurricane Beryl passed the island of Petite Martinique, Grenada. (OSV News/Reuters/Arthur Daniel)

Harvey noted that of the things that the government realized with the flattening of Caracou and Petite Martinique are the changes that will have to take place during rebuilding in those areas.

"There is an opportunity to decide who we will become, what kind of communities we will be and what kind of homes we will construct," he said, adding that the region needs to take a "deliberate and considered" approach honoring the wishes of local residents.

"One person said to me two days ago the characteristic of Grenada homes was the wrap-around verandas where people sit and talk in the evenings, the hope that however people rebuilt they will not lose that Grenedan identity, which is threatened by some of the modern houses that have been built," Harvey said.

"We have to think about that, and I want to suggest that we as Catholics have to pray about that because maybe this is an opportunity for the church to help to use some of what we have to improve the housing stock of Grenada," he said.

The Diocese of St. George's serves an estimated 46,485 Catholics in 20 parishes. It is a suffragan of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Castries (Saint Lucia) and a member of the Antilles Episcopal Conference.

The bishop made a special appeal to Grenada family and friends living overseas: "Don't rush to send this and that, find out what is needed; find out from your families what they want to do and give them the opportunity to make these decisions for

themselves," he said.

Scattered debris and houses with missing roofs are seen in a drone photograph July 2, 2024, a

Scattered debris and houses with missing roofs are seen in a drone photograph July 2, 2024, after Hurricane Beryl passed the island of Petite Martinique, Grenada. (OSV News/Reuters/Arthur Daniel)

In Miami, the archdiocesan Catholic Charities agency had set up a portal for donations, while the Baltimore-based Catholic Relief Services noted that it had a field person working in Grenada still assessing the scope of the damages there, according to Robyn Fieser, a regional marketing manager for CRS in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Communities across Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Antilles, Jamaica, Haiti, Mexico and other countries in the storm’s path will need emergency relief, protection and recovery, according to a CRS statement, adding that in Grenada, a reported 98% of buildings — home to some 6,000 people — are damaged or destroyed. Most families there collect rain from rooftops, which is a low-cost way to store drinking water. With such extreme damage to homes, drinking water is now running out, according to CRS.

Assistance will prioritize shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as access to food and essential supplies.

Harvey called for his flock to begin thinking of how God calls his people to begin anew as they make their way forward through recovery and response following Beryl.

"So we have a moment to start over again; there are people who need a lot of help, who need food and therefore they have to be attended to."

"But let us also begin to think about who you will become through all of this, who were you becoming in those hours on Monday when you were cowering in anguish or fear, anxiety. Out of the chaos of this disaster, come, and let us walk together to new places and dreams that never were," he said.