

Hurricane Sandy: A storm 'many have feared for a long time'

BY MARK PATTISON

Hurricane Sandy "is a storm that people in southern New Jersey have feared for a long time because of its direct impact on the coast," an area with that is highly developed and also has a significant rate of poverty, said an official of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Camden, N.J.

"Ocean City, N.J., which is in Cape May County, that was completely covered with water ... and that's a fairly large area," Kevin Hickey, executive director of Catholic Charities, told Catholic News Service Oct. 30. He said Wildwood, N.J., was similarly underwater and flooding would be a severe problem anywhere where rivers met bays or estuaries.

Access had been barred to the barrier islands — which include Atlantic City — because state and local police and fire officials were assessing the extent of power outages and flooding.

Hickey said teams had been set up to establish relief services, and that two parishes had been identified by midday Oct. 30 as relief distribution sites.

Camden was one of many dioceses along the East Coast that followed the lead of federal, state and local governments in shutting operations as Hurricane Sandy made landfall Oct. 29 in New Jersey with stiff winds, huge rainfalls, power outages and severe flooding.

Catholic Charities USA was working with its local affiliates along the East Coast to get them necessary supplies and services once the storm passed.

"Reports from the National Weather Service make it clear that many of our agencies on the East Coast — from New York all the way down to Florida — will be feeling some impact from Hurricane Sandy and we stand ready to provide whatever support necessary to meet the needs of those affected," said an Oct. 29 statement from Samuel Chambers, Catholic Charities USA senior vice president of disaster operations.

"Since Hurricane Katrina, we have fo-

cus on being prepared for future disasters," said an Oct. 29 statement from Catholic Charities USA president Father Larry Snyder. "Not only are we early responders, but our presence in the community also puts us in a position to be able to quickly assess and provide support in the long term."

Dioceses heeded the advice of governors and big-city mayors, who had declared a state of emergency in their respective jurisdictions, and shut down for at least one day with the possibility of extending their shutdown longer. The Camden Diocese was closed Oct. 29 and 30.

The Archdiocese of New York closed Oct. 29 "due to the decision by the MTA to suspend public transportation as a result of Hurricane Sandy," said a statement on the archdiocesan website. The MTA is the Metropolitan Transit Authority; New York's subway system shut down Oct. 28, and public transportation remained shuttered Oct. 30. As for the possibility of continued closing, the statement added, "we will be guided by the deci-

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CNS/SHANNON STAPLETON, REUTERS

People stand among homes destroyed by fire and the effects of Hurricane Sandy at the Breezy Point section of Queens borough in New York Oct. 30.

Supreme Court declines to hear Oklahoma 'personhood' case

■An Oklahoma ruling that stopped an attempt to amend the state constitution to define "personhood" in order to ban abortion will stand, after the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal.

Without comment Oct. 29, the court rejected an appeal of the state Supreme Court's order last spring that stopped a citizens' initiative to put the Oklahoma Personhood Initiative on the November ballot.

The initiative would have amended the state constitution to define a person as "any human being from the beginning of the biological development of that human being to natural death."

The organization Personhood Now, which promoted the measure, said on its website that the intention of the initiative was to make all abortions illegal.

"The aim of state and federal personhood

amendment is different from measures that try to regulate abortion such as waiting periods or parental consent bills," the site said. "Personhood confronts abortion head on and says, 'Stop it now!' Personhood calls it like is: Every human being is a person, and you should never intentionally take the life of an innocent person."

The state court stopped the effort to put the measure on the ballot, ruling that it was an unconstitutional attempt to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings legalizing abortion.

In a press release from Liberty Counsel, the law firm representing the personhood campaign, chairman Mat Staver said the court's refusal to take the case "has no precedential value."

Staver added: "The issue is not about the merits of personhood but about whether a

state court can interfere with the rights of citizens to gather signatures to amend their constitutions. On the issue, the Oklahoma Supreme Court decision is wrong. But this is by no means the end of the road in Oklahoma. Personhood initiatives will continue to expand throughout the country.

"The time has come for government to acknowledge what science has long recognized — that human life begins from the moment of conception or fertilization and should be protected in law from its earliest beginnings."

A bill in the Oklahoma Legislature that echoed the initiative's wording passed the state Senate last year but did not go further. Personhood Oklahoma listed among supporters the Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Diocese of Tulsa. **TD**

—CNS

'Tweets' of Vatican II quotes reveal council's impact, legacy

BY PAULA DOYLE
Staff Writer

As part of its preparations for the current Year of Faith, the archdiocesan Office of Religious Education decided to broaden its digital outreach and use Twitter to re-connect/introduce people to the historic documents of Vatican II during its 50th anniversary year.

"We decided we wanted to make sure that parishes had resources, so we started a webpage on the archdiocese's website that has the documents as well as events offered across the archdiocese that deal with the Year of Faith, Vatican II or the New Evangelization," said Mike Norman, archdiocesan associate director of the Office of Religious Education.

"And then we said, 'Let's challenge ourselves as an office,' so we divided up the Vatican II documents, found [important]

quotes and narrowed them down to 140 characters" allowed in Twitter "tweets," explained Norman.

"Our goal is to introduce a line or a quote from one of the Vatican II documents, and then we want to have dialogue [with] people responding," he continued. "It engages conversation online about these different quotes."

He noted that the day the announcement went up about the Vatican II twitter project on ORE's Year of Faith homepage on Oct. 11 — Vatican II's official anniversary — 47 new "likes" appeared on the website. Two or three new tweets will appear weekly on ORE's Twitter account (@OREinADLA) and Facebook page (facebook.com/OREinADLA), as well as on the ORE Year of Faith webpage, which can be accessed on their unique homepage of the larger archdiocesan website (<http://archla.org/ore>). More than 150 separate tweets will be published through the

end of the Year of Faith, which concludes before the beginning of Advent 2013.

"We tweeted a lot during Youth Day and the Religious Education Congress last year, but this would be the first time we've done this document-based dialogue about church documents," said Norman.

Last week's Oct. 22 tweet dealt with the topic of the use of sacramentals, such as holy water and blessed oil. "Sacramentals impart grace — celebrating them disposes the faithful to receive this grace, worship God duly & practice charity. SC59." (Note: SC is an abbreviation for "Sacrosanctum Concilium," the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.)

An earlier quote discussed extreme unction: "'Extreme unction,' more fittingly called 'Anointing of the sick,' is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. SC73."

"We would like to expand the tweets into

dialogues about formation," said Norman. "We hope it models for parishes what they could be doing for ministries in their parishes because it draws people in — it's educational/formational, but also engaging and fun at the same time."

"Putting these quotes together reminded me how significant the Council was, and how just a few words here and there had an enormous impact on the Church," said Douglas Leal, archdiocesan coordinator for adult faith formation and young adult ministry. "For example, the Council uses just one sentence to recommend a wider use of the vernacular at Mass.

"Many of the quotes are also as relevant and fresh today as they were 50 years ago. If you didn't know the source, you'd think they were just written today about the issues we're facing in our time," added Leal. **TD**