

Pope Francis sends condolences to victims of Hurricane Harvey

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Francis has voiced his sympathy to those suffering from the effects of Hurricane Harvey, offering prayers for the victims and rescue workers.

In an Aug. 31 letter to Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Pope offered his “spiritual closeness and pastoral concern” to all those affected by “the violent hurricane that swept through the states of Texas and Louisiana in these days.”

Signed by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the letter said Francis has been “deeply moved by the tragic loss of life and the immense material devastation that this natural catastrophe has left in its wake.”

The pope then offered his prayer for the victims and their families, and for all those involved in “the vital work of relief, recovery and rebuilding.”

Hurricane Harvey, which made landfall in Houston last week and is the most powerful storm to hit Texas in 50 years, left thousands stranded or forced to evacuate their homes, according to CNN.

After ravishing swaths of east Houston, the storm moved on to Port Arthur and has hit Louisiana, forcing thousands to evacuate.

In his telegram, Pope Francis voiced his confidence that the “immense and immediate” needs of the thousands affected will continue to prompt “a vast outpouring of solidarity and mutual aid in the best traditions of the nation.”

He renewed his assurance of prayer, and offered his blessing “as a pledge of consolation, strength and peace in the Lord.”