



Message from the Bishop  
to the Clergy and Faithful  
of the Diocese of Southeast Florida

Wednesday  
12 September 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Each day brings a clearer picture for us. On our daily conference calls, the clergy and I have been checking in to see how things are. There is some damage in some places, and we have not yet had complete reports from every congregation, school, and ministry.

I am happy and relieved to report that Father Larry Hooper and Kathy are fine and have been in contact with their son. They remained on Key West, and there are almost no services there. However, I am delighted that they are OK. This means that all clergy are accounted for.

I am also delighted to attach a message from the Presiding Bishop to us. He has been faithful in being in regular touch with me throughout the storm and its aftermath.

As we continue to assess, and begin to clean up and get ourselves up and running again, please allow me to remind us all of some priorities:

- People first
- Then property and other recovery matters
- Ordinary business

Please make sure, as best you can, that your people are safe and have what they need. If we can help with that, please let us know. Please pay special attention to the elderly, the homebound, and children.

Please take no risks for worship this weekend. If you find that your church is unsafe in any way, please either move worship to another building that is safe, or join a nearby congregation where it is safe to gather.

Please read carefully the informational communications that are going out from Eduardo that have a great deal of useful contacts and other information that you may need.

We shall put recovery first on our agenda. While we shall begin to get our canonically required meetings and other work back into the schedule, it is important that everyone be given enough time to get our lives back in order after what has been, and will continue to be for many, a considerable disruption to our lives.

Please take the time you need to do this, and please let us be patient and kind with each other in the aftermath of the storm. Some will be back on their feet more quickly than others. The Bishop's staff will also need time both to manage their personal affairs as well as get the Office put back together. When we are ready to handle ordinary business on a regular basis, we shall let you know. Emergencies and recovery will always have priority; regular business will have to wait.

Kate and I are home, and we are relieved that our house is sound and undamaged. Our garden has been laid waste, and we are now working hard to put things in order.

Father John Tidy, Cris Valdes, Jim Carlton, Eduardo Rivera, and I are available at any time to be helpful to our clergy, congregations, schools, and special ministries as you need us, and we shall continue to do our best to keep in touch with the clergy in various ways and ensure that you have the best help and information.

Please continue to be safe. Take no risks with life, yours or anyone else's. Thank you for all that you are doing to make God's presence real in your communities. And let us continue to be embraced by the love and mercy of God.

With love, prayers, and every blessing.

*+Peter*

## **Prayer for first responders**

Merciful Father, we commend to your loving care all first responders who are working, often at risk to themselves, to bring rescue and relief to those in need, especially our firefighters, police officers, paramedics, medical personnel, members of the armed forces, and all volunteers. We pray for our sisters and brothers at Episcopal Relief and Development and Church Insurance, as well as for the Red Cross, Food for the Poor, and other national and regional relief agencies. We pray also for those who are working to restore essential services. Give them courage in danger, skill in difficulty, and compassion in service. Sustain them with strength of body and calmness of mind, that they may perform their work to the well-being of all, so that lives may be saved and communities restored. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*(From the Upstate New York Synod ELCA, adapted)*