

Katrina lessons revisited

On Sunday, August 29th, 2010, we will celebrate the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. It will provide an opportunity to relive emotionally the experience and to reflect on its lessons as well as celebrate how far we have come in our journey of healing and recovery.

I participated in my own healing journey by penning a book, "She was no lady," as my effort to understand my own journey through the aftermath of Katrina in the first six months following the hurricane.

Others have penned books, detailing their journey and experience. Some books are just copy while others are a collection of photographic reflections.

Presently, two authors I know are penning their recollections in book form in anticipation of the fifth anniversary celebration. One, a fellow priest, is writing of his recovery efforts and his involvement in the rebuilding efforts in his community. The other person, a former correspondent for CNN, is writing her reporting recollection and reflection on the hurricane and its aftermath. She is also including reflections from various persons she interviewed for the book.

Finally, a Professor of Religion at the University of Mississippi is doing an in-depth book on the different stages and transitions through the Katrina experience. I have met with her a few times and am very interested in her approach and am looking forward to the final product.

I presume, as time goes on, that various parishes and communities, will, in their own way celebrate the anniversary in a fitting way.

In our parish, here at Our Lady of Gulf, we are planning to celebrate the anniversary with a more reflective mood. First of all, on that Sunday – August 29, 2010, we plan on having a shared, reflective homily, to allow people to reflect on their experience, the growth that has taken place in their lives since the hurricane as well as the lessons they have learned and the things they now treasure as a result of Katrina. We have also created a special color booklet, complete with reflections as well as color pictures of the destruction and the recovery in our parish. It will be a reminder of how far we have come in such a short time. The booklet will also remind us never to forget our journey through our own crucifixion to our individual Easter resurrections. It will also serve as a keepsake for generations to come to reflect on and treasure the efforts of those who helped rebuild their parish.

As part of the anniversary celebration, we have created a special DVD that maps the destruction and recovery journey in our parish. Visually, with the aid of music, video and pictures, people will be able to draw strength and hope from the experience as well as discover how far we have come in our recovery efforts..

Finally, I have felt the urge to create a special blog to reflect the lessons of Hurricane Katrina. This blog - <http://katrina-lessons.blogspot.com/> - is a platform for individuals to pen their Katrina lessons in a central place. The blog has several merits. First of all, it allows all of us, affected by Katrina, to stand back and reflect on what the experience has taught us and is continuing to teach us and then put the reflections in the blog to share with others. Secondly, by sharing such experiences through a common platform, we learn from each other. We draw strength from each other's reflections and, through our sharing, all of us grow stronger at the broken parts of our lives.

George Santayana said that 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.' Of course, our historic remembrance of Katrina is still very vivid. Yet, from such remembrances come lessons that help us grow stronger at the broken places in our lives. Healing takes time and tears. Yet, every Easter follows a crucifixion experience.

We invite you to join our blogging experience at <http://katrina-lessons.blogspot.com/> Then, all of us, in our own unique way and time, can be enriched and enrich others when we revisit our Katrina lessons.