

Pastor's Column

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“Welcome, Alena Boucree!”

This weekend we are very fortunate to have Alena Boucree with us. She is speaking at all the Masses to give us an “up close and personal” narrative on Hurricane Katrina and its ongoing effects on the Gulf Coast.

Alena is a staff member of St. Peter Claver Catholic Church in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her Pastor, Rev. Michael Jacques, is very active in their local community organizing effort which is affiliated with the national organization, PICO.

We here at St. Thomas More are affiliated with Congregations for Civic Action which is, in turn, also associated with PICO.

It was through PICO that I had the opportunity to travel to New Orleans in March, along with about 100 clergy nationwide, to view the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent failure of the levees. While there, I had the good fortune to meet Fr. Jacques. My time there and our meeting, along with a great amount of coordinating efforts by Sr. Maureen, have created this opportunity for a closer relationship between the two Parishes. Alena's visit is the beginning of this relationship.

Our Parish was very generous in the initial response to Hurricane Katrina when the call went out in September of last year. St. Thomas More collected and gave over \$30,000 to the immediate Hurricane Katrina Relief effort.

Presently, in this month of September, there is a special collection that is underway to raise needed funds in order, specifically, to rebuild the Catholic Churches in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Diocese of Biloxi, Mississippi.

Envelopes were attached to the bulletin the first weekend of September and can be returned anytime throughout the month of September. These envelopes are also available in the Parish Office and at the Information Table on the Plaza after all Masses.

Alena's presence this week allows us to hear the story of one who has had to deal with Hurricane Katrina and its ongoing aftereffects. Also, Alena will be challenging us to consider going to New Orleans for a week in February 2007 to help in the rebuild project.

Working with our sister Parish, St. Peter Claver, in our family-to-family Christmas Outreach and during this week in February 2007, will provide opportunities to get to know each other and to help each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Alena will be present on the Plaza after each Mass and will be open for your questions and comments. There will also be a reception at 12:00pm on Sunday on the lower level, which will include more information about relief efforts at St. Peter Claver and our plans to visit them in February.

Please be attentive to Alena and her story and the story of her Faith Community. Imagine yourself in her shoes!

May we respond positively and generously. I hope that I will see a number of St. Thomas More Parishioners in New Orleans in February 2007.

Fr. Mike