

Office of Communications

Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey

RELEASE NUMBER 2011.11.1

His Grace, Bishop Michael, has issued the following letter regarding the recent tragedies in Japan.

March 17, 2011

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey:

Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!

Over the past week we have watched, with heavy hearts, the nightmare of a devastating earthquake, the subsequent tsunami, and the unfolding of a nuclear crisis in Japan. This catastrophic disaster has taken an incalculable toll of thousands of lives, displacement of homeless victims, and irreparable damage to property and the environment.

Our initial response as Orthodox Christians is, of course, prayer to the Lord who loves mankind for our brothers and sisters in Japan, many of whom are Orthodox Christians, and for all those afflicted; for the repose of the souls of those who have departed this life in the wake of this tragedy ... and for the health and safety, care and healing of those who have lost their family members, their homes, and their hope.

In this season of Great Lent we are especially reminded, however, that prayer is not enough. Poignantly the Holy Apostle James asks us, *“If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?”* (James 2:15-16). Ours must be a faith in action, as our Lord’s love for us was love in action, demonstrated by His death on the Cross for our salvation. The Gospel of Matthew is explicit in recording Christ’s teaching -- we must care for the hungry and thirsty, the naked and sick: *“Whatever you do for the least of My brethren, you do it for Me”* (Matthew 25:40).

Obedient to this directive, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has asked that a **special collection** be taken in all our parishes on Sundays, **March 20 and 27**. Our faithful are asked to give generously toward recovery efforts in ravaged Japan. All contributions should be made payable to: ***International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)*** and when they are all gathered, they should be forwarded to:

IOCC
Post Office Box 630225
Baltimore MD 21263-0225

Individual donations may also be made on-line at www.iocc.org, or by calling toll free: 877-803-4622. Please be sure to indicate your gift as *“Relief for Japan.”*

