

Office of Communications

Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey

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Beloved in the Lord:

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

In enduring the ravages of “SuperStorm” Sandy, the people of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut have experienced a nightmare of devastation, the likes of which many of us have only ever witnessed on movie screens -- or on the news, happening to people we do not know... in places far away.



But these past weeks, the punishing effects of Sandy, followed by a severe nor'easter mere days later, have taken a tragic toll. Millions lost power; some still await its restoration as winter sets in. Thousands are displaced from their residences; some have lost their homes completely. And, too many -- neighbors, co-workers, friends, family -- lost their lives.

What is the place of a loving God in all this devastation? And, what are we as Orthodox Christians to do in response?

We do not have a God Who creates or wishes evil, terror, and death -- for “*God desires not the death of a sinner, but that he should turn from his way and live.*” Because of the broken condition of creation, catastrophes happen; but our God takes that which the devil intends for evil -- and He turns it for good. Indeed, strange though it sounds, even amidst this incalculable tragedy the glory of God can be revealed.

This is a hard saying, and it begs the question – **how?** How can the glory of a good God possibly be revealed in such an unbridled disaster?

God’s glory is revealed when those who suffer profound loss in their lives turn toward Him for hope and strength in their suffering. His glory is revealed when His people roll up their sleeves and help those who find themselves in need. We are called to reflect the goodness and the glory of God and do all that we can to help.

If all you can do is pray... then pray -- every day -- for the victims of these storms. Resolve to intensify your Advent fast as a means of making your prayers more potent. But if praying is *not* all you can do, then do more. If you can make an offering, then please consider giving a donation to the **Hurricane Sandy Diocesan Relief Fund**, via the address at the end of this letter.

And, if you can, get into your car and drive to a neighborhood where volunteers are needed. Help restore a storm-damaged neighborhood ... help people clean up their yards ... offer rides to those without cars. What seems a small gesture to us is a priceless healing presence to others.

