

and military 'ready to eat' meals that were distributed from various sites in the community. Slowly we began to get the news of what had happened in New Orleans and on the Coast and we felt very fortunate. All of the old folks said that they had never seen a storm like this hit Central Mississippi.

On Sunday, September 4th we had Mass early in the morning to avoid the heat. More people came than I had anticipated given the conditions people had been living under all week.

There was a deep sense of thanksgiving on the part of those gathered and yet a somber tone remembering those who had lost their life all along the coast and in New Orleans. There were no cries of "Why us?" or any words of anger or despair - just thanks and gratitude!

Tuesday, September 6th brought us power and a desire to get going. People arrived at the Sacred Heart Family Center (former school) and got right to gathering food, packing bags of non-perishable goods, and organizing trips to the Food Bank. Our front lawn became the 'staging area' for electric restoration in the outlying areas of the parish. More than 60 utility

trucks and crews from Michigan, Iowa, Long Island, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania lined up to get their orders and then fanned out to restore electricity to remote homes.

At 3 P.M. the power went off and was not to return for eight days. The phones ...went dead by the next morning. Later...we found ourselves blocked in on both sides of the road by large pine and oak trees that had fallen across the roads.

Our teen youth group gathered food, games and other items and drove into the Jackson Coliseum where thousands of displaced people were being housed to offer some hope, play with the children and help in any way they could.

Meals were cooked for our elders and delivered to their homes. We even fed many of the utility crews, giving them a taste of

"Southern Hospitality".

Efforts continued focused on assisting the many people who have fled New Orleans and the Coast and were looking for permanent housing in our area so they can be close to home and the rebuilding efforts. We locally had to throw out quite a bit of spoiled food and restock for our senior feeding program freezers. We did not have any major structural damage and neither did most of our parish other than the occasional tree on a house. We are thankful for the prayers, calls and offers of assistance from many. V

from Kenan Ryan in Philadelphia

Katrina and Rita, the wicked sisters of the East, sweep across the Gulf, growing into Category Four 4 storms that struck the Mississippi coast and New Orleans with devastating force. "Catastrophic" has come to seem a mild euphuism for the results of these hurricanes, especially for Katrina.

We here in the Philadelphia area were fortunate. Being three-and-a-half hours by car from where she hit, Katrina arrived in our area in central Mississippi on Monday night. Its winds, reduced from their original 175-145 mph, were still strong enough to topple trees, damage buildings, down power lines

plunging the area into darkness and disturbing phone service. But compared to the coast and parts of Louisiana, here the effect of the storm was minor. Holy Rosary at Tucker sustained some damage to the roof of its hall, but here at Holy Cross only a few branches fell.

The real tragedy we experienced was the individuals and families that were seeking shelter and safety. Some had lost everything. All were stunned by the experience.

We were privileged to help a number in various ways: housing, medical needs, emergency funds, ⇨