

years, sought refuge with her extended family at the nearby National Space Center of NASA, on Sunday afternoon. Refused entrance to the Center, they returned to Pearlington and took shelter - all sixteen of them — at the home of one of Camille's son's who owns a house built ten feet above the ground.

The waves hitting Pearlington crested between 35 and 40 feet. As the waters rose, many took shelter in their attics and some people were trapped there. At Camille's son's house they were forced to cut a hole in the ceiling and take refuge upon the roof of the house. As the water continued to rise, all seventeen had to swim out to a nearby boat. For the next four to five hours they rode out the storm in their little ark. They lost their home, their vehicles, but they still had their

family. Later Camille told me that never for one moment during the entire ordeal did she experience a moment of fear or anxiety for herself or family.

Some asked me "What are your future plans?" "Well," I said, "I'll be having Mass tomorrow and in Pearlington, and that's the future."

There are lighter moments in all this chaos. We had a lovely and well-built retreat house connected with the parish, located almost a mile from the church, with only a swamp between it and the Pearl River. When I was finally able to make my way back to it, only a large concrete slab remained, and setting high in the middle of it was an unopened bottle of vodka. It was as if the Lord were saying, "When you see this, you are going to need this." ▼

From Thaddeus Searles in Pineville

I decided to remain with my parish during Hurricane I Katrina. As a navy veteran of World War II, I remembered that the captain never leaves the ship before all the crew and passengers leave.

Many of our people decided to remain, another reason to stay in the parish. At 8:30 A.M. on Monday morning the storm hit with tremendous force. Big oak trees were uprooted. The windows in my office blew out. I covered the office machines with blankets and sealed up the broken windows. I became so involved in preventing more damage that I never really thought much of the hurricane.

The roofs on the church and hall were blowing away. The water from the Gulf of Mexico came within five feet of the rectory and church, which are a mile-and-a-half from the beach.

We suffered no damage from flood waters, only from the terrible wind and the rain. Our hall, despite its leaking roof, was in good shape so we let several families live there. Two neighboring priests who lost their homes came to stay in our rectory.

We had no power or lights, so we had no water until Trinity Missions' truck arrived with a gas generator as well as food and water. Things began to look up. My neighbor put a temporary tarp on the church and hall to prevent future rain damage.

The town of Pass Christian is 75% gone. Two nearby - but closer to the coast - larger Catholic churches, in Pass Christian and Long Beach, were totally destroyed.

Our post office was gone so we had no mail for several weeks. There was no telephone service. We were cut off from the world. Because we had no TV, the world knew more about what the hurricane was doing to us than we did.

But the charitable response to the hurricane's victims was terrific. Now our task is to rebuild: the repairs of the roof of all our buildings will cost sixty thousand dollars, a small sum when compared to what so many others lost.

God has been good to us, watching over and protecting Our Lady of Lourdes parish and its people. And we are grateful. V

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