

May 13 Update
From Joanna Williams, Director of Children's Discipleship

I remember kvetching with a friend some years ago, after my husband Jim was laid off from his job as the result of international outsourcing, "I know none of us can be sure about what will happen tomorrow, but I want my illusion back!" The feeling after last week is much the same, isn't it?

We continue to hear of parishioners, friends, or acquaintances who have lost so much. Or we learn that FEMA aid isn't getting to some who need it most. The water is down, the dust is settling, and reality is setting in. This isn't going to be better tomorrow.

As we've taken stock of where things are for our children's ministry, we're coming to understand that we've been hit pretty hard. The carts containing the materials we use for our children's discipleship, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, were in the room closest to the water's entryway, so our losses were substantial. VBS plans have been thwarted because of the condition of our facility. Children's Chapel and child care have new obstacles to overcome.

All these things are tough, but our blessings are many. Response from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd community across the nation has been amazing. There has been an outpouring of love, concern, and offers of materials and labor to help rebuild our program from as far away as Las Vegas, Nevada. The response from within our parish has been equally amazing. Several times last week, I called Larry Trabue, asking him to rally volunteers for various clean up and inventory jobs. Each time, within 10 minutes of hanging up, my phone began to ring like a Jerry Lewis Telethon!

In recent months, we've begun to consider how our ministry here might focus on equipping and supporting parents in their role as the primary disciplers of their children. When we headed down that road, little did we know that the events of the last week would necessitate being with our children even more this summer, offer us opportunities to teach them to serve, and require us to frame tragedy through the eyes of God for them.

How can we speak about these events with our children? Last Sunday, seventy-two children attended our children's chapel. We talked about what had happened in our own homes and the homes and businesses of those we know. We shared about the damage to facilities that have been home to many of our fondest memories of parish life and preschool. And we talked about what God might say to us about it all. At the upcoming parish picnic, children will be able to express through art the feelings that may be difficult to articulate. The resulting "We Are St. George's" banner will soften the starkness of the plywood that now stands in our building. As questions and concerns surface with your children, know that I would be pleased to support you by talking to you or them as we try to understand what has happened and why.

We do not yet know all the plans for the summer and beyond, but brainstorming and planning have begun. Vacation Bible School alternatives will include service opportunities, family focus, and hands on opportunities to rebuild our parish. We fully expect to be back to chapel and discipleship as usual by the fall.

Our children and youth will see tragedy in their lifetime. What a gift that they have the opportunity to experience the response to it within the body of Christ! I look forward to seeing the mighty hand of God at work in other ways in our homes, our parish, and our city in the days to come.

Joanna

