



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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The Weather:



No Longer that Neutral Topic

“Puerto Rico...

Island of tropical breezes...

Island of tropic diseases.

Always the hurricanes blowing...

Always the population growing.

I'll drive a Buick through San Juan...

If there's a road you can drive on.

I'll bring a T.V. to San Juan...

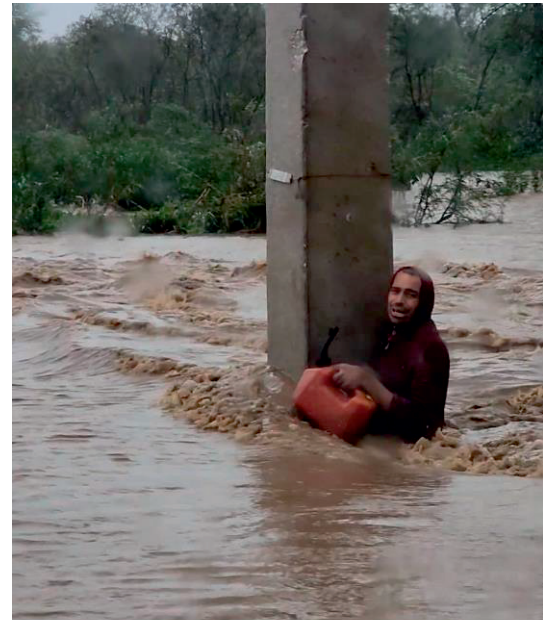
If there's a current to turn on!”

Dear Mission Friends:

Steven Sondheim's always clever lyrics, often in debate form in which no one wins, don't disappoint in this song taken from “America” in the original 1957 musical *West Side Story*. Sung by cousins Rosalia (Maria in the movie version) and Anita, whose families moved from Puerto Rico to New York looking for a better life, it illustrates the extremes of feeling for their native island. The younger, more impetuous one is happy in New York, despite its discrimination, lack of good jobs and decent pay, simply because she has fallen in love with a boy from there; the other, whose roots are stronger, is not happy and wants to go back, in spite of hurricanes and heat, washed-out roads and frequent power outages, because it's her home and she misses it.

Indeed, to the outsider, **Puerto Rico seems God-forsaken. It has long been plagued with frequent and extreme weather systems that are only becoming more frequent and more extreme.** In September 2017, it was hit by one of the strongest hurricanes in the history of the island. Maria killed nearly 3,000 people and left the entire island without power, gas, water service, and communication for months. Many lost their homes and everything they owned. It caused structural damage to an unknown number of buildings and destroyed nearly all road signs and traffic lights. It wiped out roads, and a month after the hurricane hit only 8% of them were open. Five months after, a quarter of the island's residents still lacked electricity. Maria's damage was severe and lasting and reconstruction had been slow and arduous.

Three years later, in 2020, when basically nothing had been done yet to strengthen or increase the resiliency of the electric grid or other critical infrastructures, Puerto Rico was hit again, this time with a magnitude 6.5 earthquake that tragically left them with more fallen buildings, more landslides, more collapsed houses, and increased weakness in building architecture.



Puerto Rican man on search for gasoline gets stuck in sludge.

Later that year a severe drought began, lasting 91 weeks, in which water for drinking and washing was strictly rationed or of poor quality, and crops were delayed or died. Rain finally broke through this September 13 but paradoxically, after five days, on September 18 around 2 p.m., Hurricane Fiona hit with 100 mph winds and extremely heavy rains. It caused floods and overflowing rivers in areas that had never been hit. Landslides destroyed countless crops and collapsed two bridges. In the five years since Maria, only 30% of permanent reconstruction work had begun and more than 3,000 homes still had blue tarps for a roof when Fiona showed up.



Damage in Puerto Rico from the latest in a series of relentless natural disasters.

The whole island lost power and many of its 3.3 million residents lost access to clean water, food, and medicine, not to mention their homes, clean clothes, beds, etc. Anxiety and uncertainty hit many since communication had come to a halt and they anticipated months before help would arrive. Fr. Mark Francis Manzano, O.P., our missionary at the Dominican community in Bayamon in the north reports that, after three weeks, power and water in his part of the island have finally been restored, but the friars living in Yauco and all whom they serve in the island's southern region, the hardest hit, still only have power from generators, which require hard-to-get diesel. Grocery stores had been contemplating dumping their perishables because they couldn't get diesel...and still no clean water.

Many worry that, despite President Biden's visit and promise to take care of everything, most of the recovery help will be focused on Florida, which was hit by Hurricane Ian about the same time and caused historic flooding. And perhaps they are right to worry. The island has a higher poverty rate than any state, and even though Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, they can't vote in presidential elections, have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress, and too often are seen as "not quite American enough."

They have not forgotten that after Maria, more than 10 million water bottles from FEMA were dropped unannounced and left unused on an airport tarmac. Three electric companies were hired to fix the electric grid, and all three contracts were cancelled due to bidding fraud, links to U.S. government officials, or bribes. The island's government itself seems less than upright. Between 2019 and 2022, two governors were ousted, one recalled due to inefficiency and unprofessionalism and the other arrested on corruption charges. Rep. Mariana Nogales succinctly describes her beloved island, literally and metaphorically: *"We are living in a state of eternal fragility."* So why would anyone choose to stay there? Because it's home, and all who call it home are entitled to timely, efficient, and quality reconstruction and increased infrastructure resiliency.

I've said it before but it bears repeating, especially when corruption or even just inefficiency is present wherever one looks: **Please be assured that your donations are sent directly to our Dominican representative of the area you so designate;** if there is no designation, they are sent directly to our Dominican friars or sisters in that area which we deem to be most in need at the time, which is not always easy to decide, especially when natural disasters happen simultaneously in different parts of the world.

Right now Pakistan is also suffering from extreme weather phenomena and, like Puerto Rico, has lately experienced a seemingly unfair share of natural disasters. Despite being responsible for only about 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan, where 22% of people already live below the poverty line, is bearing the brunt of the progressing climate change. This past May 2022 brought an extended, unusually severe heatwave of 104+ degrees, much earlier than normal, which exacerbated the melting of mountain glaciers, and streams of meltwater rushed down the Himalayan and Karakoram mountain ranges. Then June saw the onset of heavy monsoon rains, continuing through August and pelting the country with more than ten times the average rainfall values for this part of the year: 15.4 inches of rain, or nearly 190% more than the 30-year average. Sindh province alone has seen 466% more rain than average. By the time water from the northern glacial melt and dams started coming down into Sindh in the south, the soil was already submerged. The torrential rain resulted in deadly flooding, leaving more than a third of the country under water. The Indus river, for example, spilled far beyond its banks, creating a lake over 60 miles long and over 6 miles wide.



September in Pakistan



As I write, the death count has exceeded 1500 people, including 528 children, but is expected to at least double. Thirty-three million people, also a conservative number, have been affected, half of which include children, according to Unicef. The numbers are likely to end up much higher since those in the most remote regions have yet to be reached by anyone bringing aid.

The country's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif described the floods as the worst in Pakistan's history, estimating it would cost at least \$10 billion to repair damaged infrastructure. The rains severely damaged more than a million homes—about half a million people have been rescued with helicopters and boats and taken to relief camps; thousands more have taken shelter on roadsides on higher ground. The rains devastated large tracts of farm land and swept away countless crops and livestock, all vital to the owners' livelihood and the general economy, not to mention immediate nourishment. Mosquitoes are rampant in all the standing water and people must walk in and drink the same contaminated water. Already malnourished children are battling such water-borne diseases as diarrhea, malaria, dengue fever, and painful skin conditions.

"The situation for Pakistani families is beyond bleak," said Sharif. One family, already poor, lost their small mud and brick house in the floods and has been living on the street in a tent. On a recent night the mother had fallen asleep with her three-year-old daughter in her arms but woke up at some point to find her gone, and she has not yet been found. Most probably the little girl got up, fell into standing flood water and drowned. The devastated mother moaned, "If the floods had spared my home; if we weren't living on the side of the road; if I hadn't been sleeping so soundly, then maybe Numa would be safe. Please help me find my little girl."

It's one crisis after another in Pakistan. The economy was already wobbly with rampant inflation and the flood damage is estimated at over \$10 billion at this point. It's compounding existing acute problems, like poverty, food insecurity and child safety issues. Some of the water has begun to recede in certain areas and should be gone in three to six months. But while necessary, that will expose more bodies, animal carcasses, and fields of debris and attract more mosquitoes and other insects, leading to more waterborne and insect-borne illnesses. This is the third month of the monsoon season and aid is erratic.

What we're hearing now is that the government is slow to react because the problems are so big that they seem unapproachable. Many say not to send any money through local officials or the higher branches of the government because they take their "administrative share." Give it to the army, they say. "They'll give us the food we need." But others say that the army seems to "misplace" any aid that they receive. There's a lot of distrust of institutions here right now. Volunteers from less affected areas, therefore, have been collecting donations of money and food items, medicine, and other necessities and just driving into hardest-hit places and dropping them off themselves. **Dominicans in Karachi have been providing such localized solutions. Their house was damaged by the rains, which they will repair themselves, but the friars, nuns, and sisters are all fine and eager to help. That's what they do.** Through Fr. Patrick Peter at the Dominican House of Studies, Karachi and Fr. Younas Shahzad, their province's Prior Vice Provincial, they ask only that we and our mission friends, "*Keep us all in your prayers!*" In turn, they write, "*God bless you abundantly. We assure you of our prayers for your friars, friends and benefactors. We would like to express words of gratitude to you and your Mission Foundation team for your timely help and support, your generosity and loving concern.*"





Fr. James Channan and volunteers at the province's Peace Center, one of the distribution points for food and supplies.



In both disaster areas of Puerto Rico and Pakistan, the innocent victims don't want to hear about politics or policy; they just want help now. **That's what we do, thanks to you.**

With pure gratitude in this month of giving thanks,
Lesley Warmshuis

Prayer for Thanksgiving Dinner

Oh, God, when I have food,
help me to remember
the hungry;
When I have work, help me to
remember the jobless;
When I have a warm home,
help me to remember
the homeless;
When I am without pain,
help me to remember
those who suffer.

And remembering, help me to
destroy my complacency and
bestir my compassion.
Make me concerned enough to
help, by word and deed,
those who cry out for what we
take for granted.

~Samuel F. Pugh



St. Martin de Porres Triduum

November 1, 2, and 3

First Day: *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Second Day: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Third Day: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Dear Mission Friends,

We at the Mission Office thank you especially in this month of Thanksgiving for all of your selfless support in all of its forms, from financial sacrifices to encouraging messages to heartfelt prayer. Your loving generosity over the past 59 years has been invaluable in improving the quality of life for those in our mission areas all over the world.

Thanks be to God for you,
Fr. Jordan Bradshaw, O.P.
Director