



August 28, 2015

Dear Friends in the Lord,

For the last month, the national news has been filled with stories about the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the floods that devastated so much of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast Region. There have been hopeful stories of recovery and resiliency, touching stories of extraordinary acts of kindness and heroism, spiritual stories of faith in horribly troubling times, and sad stories of the people who have been left behind and left out of the rebuilding of the area.

The Jesuits and Jesuit works of the Central and Southern Province also have our stories of recovery, kindness, faith, and forgotten people, and on this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary we pause for a moment to remember some of these.

- We remember and give thanks for all of Jesuit communities, works and affiliates from as far away as Patna, Malta, and Trinidad whose generous financial donations enabled the New Orleans Province to provide rebuilding and support grants to our affected Jesuit works and affiliated social ministries, and to offer support to employees and students of our works who needed our help to rebuild their lives.
- We celebrate the members of the Ignatian family who came to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast through the province Katrina Relief Office to help families, churches, schools and communities rebuild. The numbers are amazing: 22 Jesuit colleges and university and 26 Jesuit secondary schools came to the area 125 times. In just 30 months, these students, as well as Jesuit Volunteers, men in formation and other members of the Ignatian family gutted 240 homes, helped rebuild 140 homes, and provided 132,669 hours of labor.
- We recall with gratitude the many Jesuit universities, colleges, and high schools across the U.S. who took in students displaced from Jesuit High School and Loyola University New Orleans for the Fall '05 semester; most did so without asking for credentials, grades, or even tuition.
- We give thanks that 10 years after the storm and the flood, all of the sponsored and affiliated Jesuit works in New Orleans have recovered and in some cases have even thrived. We know that this would not have been possible without the strength and determination of the Jesuits and lay colleagues who led those ministries, and the prayers and extraordinary generosity of the Ignatian family who supported them in the days and years after the storm.

Our province would be remiss, however, if we just celebrated our own recovery on this 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Amid this celebration we also need to listen the voices of those who have been left

behind in the recovery - people like the families of Good Shepherd students who were never able to move back to New Orleans, or the homeless people who come to the Harry Tompson Center every day because they have never psychologically recovered from the storm, or the immigrants seen by Loyola's Law Clinic who came to New Orleans to rebuild residents' homes but cannot claim the city as a home even after having lived there 10 years.

So on this Anniversary we offer petitions of gratitude for the prayers and generosity of the people who made recovery possible for our works in the Gulf South. Let us also join in prayers of solidarity for those people and communities who still wait for hope, healing, and homecoming.

In the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald A. Mercier, S.J." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Ronald A. Mercier, S.J.  
Provincial