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In south Florida, Katrina was no Andrew

Homestead farms, workers were hardest hit; church buildings largely unscathed.

By Ana Rodriguez-Soto, Miami

Thirteen years and one day after Andrew, south Florida was once again in the direct path of a hurricane. Mercifully, Katrina was no Andrew.

But people in Homestead did have to endure widespread flooding and many of the farmworkers who live in the area were facing an uncertain future as farms and nurseries coped with massive crop losses.

"Once again, Homestead has been battered by a hurricane and it is our responsibility to care for those affected, including the migrant workers located in this area," said Deacon Richard Turcotte, chief executive officer of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami.

Catholic Charities set up three relief centers — one in Homestead, one in Big Pine Key, one in Key West — for those hardest-hit by the storm. The archdiocese is also accepting donations for victims of Katrina in Louisiana, where it came ashore Monday as a Category 4 hurricane. (See sidebar below.)

Katrina was a Category 1 when it made its



TFC PHOTO BY MARLENE QUARONI

The exterior of the art building's roof at La Salle High

first landfall in the early evening of Aug. 25 between Hallandale Beach and Sunny Isles Beach, at the border between Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

School in Miami was torn off by the winds of Hurricane Katrina. The trailer in the front, which apparently was protected by the school building, is part of the Archdiocesan Youth Center.

Expected to continue heading west across Florida, the storm's somewhat disorganized eye instead took a turn to the south, bringing the worst of its winds and rains into Kendall, Homestead and Florida City — areas hard hit by Andrew 13 years ago. Katrina then headed into the Gulf of Mexico, sideswiping the middle and lower Keys as it strengthened and headed northwest.

The storm felled trees and caused flooding in southernmost Miami-Dade County, but caused no widespread damage to churches or archdiocesan facilities.

"We have primarily sustained damage to landscaping and those types of things," said Bob Brown, archdiocesan director of building and construction.

The most serious damages were to La Salle High School near downtown Miami, on the edge of Biscayne Bay, which lost the roofs of three of its buildings; and St. John Neumann Church in Kendall, where the ceiling on an outdoor covered walkway collapsed.

"We're looking into the reasons why it happened," said Brown, although it was certainly hurricane-related.

Catholic schools in Miami-Dade remained closed Aug. 29 in accordance with archdiocesan policy of following the public schools' schedule. Catholic schools in Broward reopened.

"It sure looks like (Katrina) was a Category 1," said Deacon Turcotte. "There's structural damage to homes where the trees fell on them, but it's nothing like Andrew, where roofs were lifted off."

Deacon Turcotte has seen firsthand the devastation wrought not only by Andrew but also by Charley on Florida's west coast and Ivan in Pensacola, both Category 4 storms that hit last year.

Nevertheless, Homestead neighborhoods — where Katrina

Emergency centers, relief fund established

The Archdiocese of Miami Catholic Charities and its Emergency Response Team have set up three relief centers in south Florida to respond to the needs of those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Locations are:

Miami-Dade County

- Sacred Heart Catholic Parish and Catholic Charities Outreach Center, 106 E. First Drive, Homestead. Provides financial assistance, food and baby items, including formula and diapers. Hours of operation: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Monroe County

- St. Peter, Big Pine Key, 31300 Overseas Highway. Provides financial assistance, food, baby items, including formula and diapers. Hours of operation: Monday-Friday, 9-5 p.m.

dropped almost 18 inches of rain — were hard hit by flooding. The area is home to most of south Florida's agricultural land. The University of Florida's Cooperative Extension Service in Miami-Dade County estimated Katrina caused about \$400 million in damages to area nurseries and avocado groves.

Many of Homestead's residents are farmworkers who find jobs in the fields during the planting season or in the nurseries year-round. With the planting season yet to get underway and the nurseries under water, farmworkers and their families will be facing harder-than-usual economic times.

Katrina also knocked out electrical power to nearly 1.5 million Florida Power and Light customers in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. About a third of them were still sweltering in the heat at the beginning of the week.

Still, considering Katrina's toll in Louisiana, south Floridians were counting their blessings. As Homestead City Manager Curt Ivy told *The Miami Herald*, "Andrew was destruction. This is inconvenience."

In the panhandle, 700 miles northwest of Miami, tropical storm-force winds from Hurricane Katrina, disrupted the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee Aug. 29, causing power outages to more than 100,000 homes. Barrier islands and low-lying areas, according to The Florida Catholic bureau reports, were evacuated over the weekend.

Residents from the neighboring communities west of Interstate 10, were redirected to the Pensacola Civic Center, which was running on generator power, and Pensacola's downtown experienced flooding.

Grateful that Hurricane Katrina did not cause more damage, parishes in Pensacola that were damaged after Hurricane Ivan plan to repay parishes in Louisiana, which helped with recovery efforts and now are in need of help due to severe damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Peggy DeKeyser, bureau editor for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee contributed to this story.

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498 S. Lake Destiny Road, Orlando, FL 32810
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- St. Francis/St. Clare Catholic Charities Shelter, 2700 Flagler St., Key West. Provides financial assistance, shelter.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Miami has established an emergency relief fund for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Please send only monetary donations. Make checks out to Catholic Charities Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund and send to:

Archdiocese of Miami
Hurricane Relief Fund
c/o Catholic Charities
9401 Biscayne Blvd.
Miami Shores, FL 33138