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## **Benedict XVI Keeping up With Haiti Situation**

### **Catholic Relief Services Commits \$25M**

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 17, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI affirmed today that he is being continually informed about developments in Haiti in the aftermath of last Tuesday's earthquake.

The Pope mentioned the catastrophe during his address after praying the midday Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter's Square.

A 7.0 earthquake struck the capital of Port-au-Prince at about 5 p.m. local time Tuesday. Though rescue efforts continue and an accurate number of victims will be days in coming, it is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 people died.

"Our thoughts, in these days, turn to the dear people of Haiti, and [we] raise up sorrowful prayer," the Holy Father said. "The apostolic nuncio, [Archbishop Bernardito Auza], who, thanks be to God, is unhurt, keeps me continually informed, and thus I heard of the sad passing of the archbishop [Joseph Serge-Miot of Port-au-Prince], as well as of many priests, religious and seminarians.

"I am following and encourage the numerous charitable organizations, who are taking charge of the immense necessities of the country. I pray for the injured, the homeless, and for those who tragically lost their lives."

Catholic relief

The Vatican congregation that oversees the Church's charitable activities, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, has asked U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services to spearhead the Church's relief effort.

CRS had some 300 staff already working in Haiti before the quake.

The agency reported that its initial pledge of \$5 million is now five times that, thanks in part to donations to CRS of more than \$10 million -- "including \$1 million from the Gates Foundation and \$225,000 from the New York Yankees." Karel Zelenka, country representative for CRS Haiti, spoke of the stress on the island. Another aftershock hit even today.

"You drive up and down the streets and you see all these bodies that are just laying down there because they have no common grave and they cannot do a proper funeral. The worst part are the children -- these little bodies," he said. "I mean, can I tell you, in general earthquakes are the worst, worst disaster that can happen."

The agency has opened a special Web site for the relief effort and donations can be made by mobile phone.

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On the Net:

Catholic Relief Services: <http://crs.org/>