



## Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

Post Office Box 12047  
Birmingham, Alabama 35202-2047

2121 Third Avenue North  
Birmingham, Alabama 35203  
Telephone: 205-838-8322  
Fax: 205-836-1910

Office of the Bishop

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### Helping Hands to the flood victims of Kerala, India ~ Special Collection October 6-7, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

For the past few weeks many prayers have been said following the terrible flooding in the state of Kerala, India.

Out of 34 million people in Kerala, about 70% have been affected by the heavy rain that lasted about two weeks. The flood has affected the entire state to the extent of changing the very geographical configuration of the region. The rivers are overflowing and some of them have even changed their direction. For the first time in the history of the state, all the 33 reservoirs had to be opened. This caused 40 main rivers to overflow resulting in widespread flooding. In some places the water has risen up to 18 feet.

As a result of all the rain, several landslides washed away entire families with their houses. The official death toll is about 400, but many are still missing. As can be expected, the hospitals are not functioning properly due to the widespread electricity failure. Communication facilities have been affected as well. The airport is closed and the widespread nature of the disaster has made travel almost impossible. The many small bridges throughout the area are near collapse. Many houses, stores, buildings and churches are submerged in water.

Relief centers have been opened in almost all churches and institutions. Priests, seminarians, religious and lay volunteers are actively involved in the rescue mission even risking their life.

Post-flood restoration and rehabilitation is the most strenuous and challenging endeavor. Unfortunately, most of those affected do not have any type of insurance. Once the flood waters recede, these people are left with mounds of mud and debris in their homes and surroundings. Many people are also bitten by venomous snakes as they return to clean their houses.

Reconstruction and renovation of damaged houses, roads, bridges, hospitals, and churches have to be immediately undertaken in a collaborated effort. Many volunteer agencies and government institutions are trying their best to lend their hands for those who are affected.

Pope Francis himself has requested prayer and support for the people of Kerala. Similarly, I ask the faithful of the Diocese of Birmingham to reach out to our brothers and sisters affected by the heart-breaking devastation by way of prayer and financial assistance. The late Bishop David E. Foley and I had the opportunity to visit the Diocese of Irinjalakuda and were warmly welcomed. Since 1998, the Diocese of Birmingham has benefited from the service of priests from the Diocese of Irinjalakuda, which was badly affected. Currently, we have 10 priests from Kerala serving in our diocese.

Again, I humbly ask the faithful to exemplify Christian charity to those affected. May God bless you for your generosity.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D.  
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama

***Pastors/Administrators: Please announce this special collection the weekend of September 29-30. The collection will take place the weekend of October 6-7.***