



Diocese of Austin

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Unified Catholic Response helps 200 families in West

AUSTIN – Through the efforts of the Unified Catholic Response for West, a collaborative effort of the Diocese of Austin, Catholic Charities of Central Texas, the Ladies of Charity of Austin, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 100 vouchers for the House in a Box program have been issued. On Saturday, the decision was made to increase the number of available vouchers to a total of 200.

When the explosion in West occurred, window glass disintegrated into a fine cornmeal-like dust, larger slivers and shards. That glass is embedded in hardwood, sheetrock, ceramic floor tiles and cabinetry. The ability to completely remove it is laborious and tenacious. It has penetrated soft furniture and fabric items making them dangerous to salvage or use. House in a Box is crucial to replace destroyed furniture and household items. The Unified Catholic Response, through House in a Box, supplies survivors with critical items to furnish a home.

The House in a Box consists of brand-new mattresses from Tempur-Pedic or Factory Mattress of Austin, a new sofa, a new dining room table and chairs, new bedroom linens, new bathroom linens, and a kitchen preparedness kit provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All items are new, providing for the dignity of the recipient families. House in a Box is now used throughout the country at disasters as part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's disaster response initiatives.

"I am so grateful to St. Vincent de Paul as now I can have items for the trailer we are renting. Our home was destroyed and glass was in everything we owned. I was afraid to use items that were left after the explosion, as I did not know what particles might be in them. Now I do not have to worry as St. Vincent de Paul has given us nice new items and there is no glass in them. We cannot thank St. Vincent de Paul enough," said a West resident and recipient of House In a Box from the Unified Catholic Response.

House in a Box, an initiative of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, began during the recovery from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It was successfully deployed in Bastrop after the wildfires, has been deployed in response to Hurricane Sandy, and will be deployed in upcoming weeks and months in response to the Oklahoma tornadoes.

The Unified Catholic Response has, in addition to House in a Box, provided disaster case management, Walmart gift cards for emergency purchases, and hotel stays for families displaced by destruction and the demolition/repair/cleaning of homes. Catholic disaster response caseworkers have been on the ground since the day after the explosion and are now housed at St. Joseph Hall at St. Mary, Church of the Assumption Parish. A family wishing to benefit from House in a Box should bring their FEMA number and see a Society caseworker during regular business hours (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

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The Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin includes 127 parishes, or faith communities, in 25 counties in Central Texas. The diocese stretches over 21,000 square miles from West, Texas, (just north of Waco) in the north to San Marcos in the south to the Bryan/College Station area in the east to Mason in the west. Its largest metropolitan areas are Austin, Bryan/College Station, the Killeen/Temple/Belton area and Waco. More than 109,000 Catholic families live in the diocese, approximately 509,000 Catholics. There are 227 priests, 168 deacons, 46 brothers and 102 sisters serving in the diocese.