



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week Fr. Russell Becker, O.F.M. Director of the Franciscan Mission along with Bro. Thomas-Joseph Cole, O.F.M. sent us letters of thanks in appreciation of the parish's generosity for the friars who serve in our missions. The collection amounted to \$16,539.31 In expressing gratitude they said, "As you well know, it is only through the continued support of communities such as yours that we are able to provide support to our brothers in South America, Asia, Africa and elsewhere as they carry out their ministries of evangelization and development. By your support, you are their Partners-in-Ministry. Be assured of our prayers and the prayers of our missionaries; they count on yours."

As we celebrate Independence Day this weekend, the following reflections are from Pope Benedict on his pastoral visit to the United States this Spring.

Shortly after his return to the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI said at a general audience at St. Peter's that everywhere he went in the United States "I was able to experience the fact that the faith is alive, that Christ is there today among the people, that he shows them the way and helps them to build the present as well as the future."

Pope Benedict said that the United States, from its founding, was built "on the foundation of a felicitous joining of religious, ethical and political principles, which still today constitutes a valid example of healthy secularity." The United States, he said, is a place "where the religious dimension in all its variety is not only tolerated, but is valued as the spirit of the nation and as the fundamental guarantee of human rights and responsibilities." Modern life and global realities continue to challenge the country, he said, and the Catholic Church has an obligation to offer its voice in order to help citizens build a society worthy of the human person and one that uses its resources to help others.

Pope Benedict said the "multicultural vocation" of the United States and the active presence of a wide variety of Christian communities and other religions gave him an opportunity to meet with religious leaders to promote closer cooperation among Christians and a dialogue to strengthen peace and religious values with other believers.

At the United Nations, he said, he wanted to help celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and confirm its enduring value precisely because it is based on "the dignity of the human person, created by God in his image and likeness, in order to cooperate with him in his plan for life and for peace." Respect for human rights and peace can flourish only where there is justice, "an ethical order valid for all times and all peoples," which can be summarized with Jesus' phrase, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

In the peace of Christ,