



October 1, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each of us, at Baptism, is given a special responsibility. We are called by our Lord to tell the world the “Good News” of His love and salvation. We are to be His missionaries. In his World Mission Day message to us this year, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirms our missionary responsibility: “The missionary mandate continues to be an absolute priority for all baptized persons who are called to be ‘servants and apostles of Christ Jesus’ at the beginning of this millennium.” (2008 Message)

Each year, on World Mission Sunday, all baptized Catholics gather for Mass – in small chapels, as well as in large cathedrals around the globe – to celebrate our missionary vocation, and to offer prayers and sacrifices for this missionary task.

Our celebration this year on October 19 takes on added significance as the Church here at home marks the 100th anniversary of our “mission independence.” In 1908, a papal decree removed the designation “mission territory” from the United States. Up until that time, we were the beneficiaries of the generosity of the Catholics of Europe through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

In fact, two-thirds of the very first collection of the Propagation of the Faith in 1822 was sent to the Church here – to the vast diocese of Louisiana and to Bardstown, Kentucky. Years of such assistance helped build schools and churches, educate local priests and Religious, provide for the work of Religious Communities, and, importantly, support evangelization here at home.

Today, more than 1,150 young churches of Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and Latin America have these same needs. As we remember our own mission history this World Mission Sunday, we willingly offer our prayers and financial help for the young and growing churches of the Missions today. Your generosity through the Propagation of the Faith will reach those who await the “Good News” of Jesus, who long to experience His hope and love.

Please be as generous as your means will allow this World Mission Sunday. As Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, “...may the celebration of World Mission Day encourage everyone to take renewed awareness of the urgent need to proclaim the Gospel” (Ibid).

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington