

Pope Benedict's pilgrimage to the United States received very favorable news coverage. He appeared as a compassionate, intelligent, humble, and personable man. His remarks about the clergy sex-abuse scandal and his pastoral care to several victims have been greatly appreciated. Pope Benedict also touched on topics that were not very popular, such as a more compassionate stance on immigration. He said that the causes of immigration need to be considered: If people are leaving their homelands because of poor economic conditions and a rise in violence there, they need help at the root of the problem. The Catholic bishops of Missouri spoke up earlier this year on the question of illegal immigrants. We all want to protect our national borders, and no one wants to condone any crime, but punishment should be reasonable. As our bishops wrote, "it is neither humane nor practical to deport the estimated 12 million unauthorized immigrants already within our borders." The bishops would like to see a process for illegal immigrants to earn their citizenship in a way that respects our laws and does not break up families.

America has a long history of welcoming the stranger. Few of us would be here if it weren't for our immigrant forebears. The Statue of Liberty is famously inscribed with the words of Emma Lazarus, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free, the wretched refuse from your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door." On the great seal of the United States of America, the eagle holds in its beak a banner that carries three words in Latin: E PLURIBUS UNUM. It means "from many, one." It affirms how people from many different places gathered here to form one nation. In dealing with immigration, it is important for us to sort out legitimate concerns about crime from inappropriate fears based on prejudice. The ideals of the Statue of Liberty and the national motto call us not just to tolerate diversity, but to seek unity.

St. Paul makes a similar point in his first letter to the Corinthians. "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit. . . . As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ." We each receive some gifts of the Holy Spirit, but none of us receives them all. We need one another to let the full manifestation of the Spirit be revealed.

This Pentecost Sunday we thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. And we find ourselves challenged in two ways – to use our gifts and to accept the gifts of others. Paul says, "To each individual the manifestation of the spirit is given for some benefit." So we who have gifts are expected to use them for the sake of others. And because the Spirit gives gifts to others for the same purpose, we need to receive those gifts wherever they might be. In doing so, we give the Holy Spirit another chance to touch our hearts and build us up in love.