



March 1, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ:

The daily news reminds us of the violence and instability plaguing the Middle East, but we rarely hear of its shrinking Christian community, a community that struggles to remain in the land of Christ's birth, death and resurrection.

The Franciscans, who have had custody of the Holy Land for 800 years, are proud to serve its people and its places, walking in Jesus' footsteps...caring for the poor, educating young people, providing scholarships, protecting the holy shrines, conducting pastoral ministries and keeping Christianity alive. The Good Friday Holy Land Collection, as directed by the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, allows the Franciscans and others to continue caring for Christianity's holiest sites and God's people.

On Good Friday all Christians are united in a special way to the land that was made holy by the presence of Jesus and Mary and the Apostles, and it is only through your generosity to the Holy Land Collection that the Franciscans can continue to provide a presence, care and service there. Pope Benedict asks us to "Build the culture of peace and mutual respect. This noble enterprise awaits you. Do not be afraid!" I ask that you give generously, if you are able, and extend my heartfelt thanks for your support of this special Pontifical Collection.

Sincerely and appreciatively yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville

This collection is to be taken up on Good Friday, April 2, 2010.

Envelopes for this collection should be in your parishioners' regular envelope packets. Please send the proceeds of this collection to the Chancery no later than Friday, May 21, 2010. Please make the check payable to "Catholic Diocese of Belleville" and indicate "Holy Land" in the lower left-hand corner of the check. Your cooperation in forwarding the check by the requested date is appreciated.

Thank you for your assistance.