My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

For more than a half century, the **Collection for the Church in Latin America** has been a sign of the solidarity of the Church in the United States with the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. The distance in rural areas and deteriorated roads make it difficult for some communities to have Mass regularly. Language barriers and lack of resources make catechetical materials difficult to produce.

Social justice issues are a constant challenge to living a life in faithful witness to our faith. For example, human captivity remains a real challenge throughout Latin America. Human trafficking in Brazil, for example, is a serious problem that takes numerous forms: forced rural labor that amounts to modern-day slavery, trafficking to support prostitution, and forced marriages. The Church in Brazil is addressing this challenge by training leaders to publicize and denounce trafficking practices and to work with all levels of government to combat human trafficking. By supporting the Collection for the Church in Latin America, you are helping Brazilians fulfill their Gospel call to protect the vulnerable, defend human life and dignity, and address the causes of human trafficking throughout the country.

The Collection for the Church in Latin America empowers the faithful of Latin America and the Caribbean to deepen their faith and share it with each other and the world. A significant portion of this collection is also used to assist in the ongoing efforts of our own **Diocesan Hispanic Ministry**, which serves the large number of Hispanic and Latino Catholics who are now in the Diocese of Worcester. It is gratifying to see the life of faith flourishing in these parish communities as their faith life enriches us all.

I encourage you to respond to the theme to "Share your Faith" by supporting the special Collection for the Church in Latin America when your parish takes up the collection. Please be assured of my appreciation for your generous response.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[Signature]

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester

*Please read or print this letter in the parish bulletin on the weekend of February 22 and take the collection for the Church in Latin America at all Masses on March 1.*