

## Pastor's Column

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### A Clear Identity...A Strong Sense of Belonging... A Deep Commitment to Excellence

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is busily preparing for the first visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States.

The Holy Father will visit Washington D.C. and New York City from April 15<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>.

He will not travel much, but will address all of the people of the United States and the world Catholic Church.

Archbishop Pietro Sambi, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, is very much involved in all the details in preparation for the papal visit.

In a wide-ranging interview recently, he was asked this question:

*“How would you analyze the situation facing the Catholic Church in the United States?”*

His response was very profound. I share his answer with you and encourage your reflection upon his words:

*“When you are a minority, as Catholics are in this culture, you need three strong principles.*

*The first is a clear identity, a clear sense of what you are and what you want to be. As a minority, if you lack clear identity, you're like a drop of wine in a glass of water...you'll disappear.*

*The second thing is a strong sense of belonging. I would express it in this way: you need a community, and the community needs you. Whoever walks alone sooner or later will be lost in the desert.*

*Third, when you are a minority, you need a deep commitment to excellence. You must excel in professional qualities, in the qualities of Christian life, in order to be a light for others. If you don't have a sense of excellence, you will be submerged by the majority.*

*When you have these three qualities – a clear identity, a sense of belonging, and a sense of excellence – then you're ready to collaborate with everybody, ready to engage yourself for a better humanity and a better future.”*

As the Faith Community of St. Thomas More, I believe that we are attempting to embody these qualities into the fabric of our Parish life.

With God's help, let us pledge ourselves as a Parish, to be a people who have a clear identity. We know who we are and what we are about.

With God's help, let us pledge ourselves as a Parish, to be a people who work vigorously to create a sense of belonging for every parishioner. We welcome, invite, encourage, and support every new household of St. Thomas More Parish and challenge them to be aware of their privileges and responsibilities as members of this Community of Faith.

With God's help, let us pledge ourselves as a Parish, to excellence. All that we do, as a Parish, will be the best we can do, despite the cost. We will give of our time, our talent, and our treasure, to make this Faith Community vibrant and alive, so that all will know that we are the Body of Christ and that the mission and ministry of Jesus does continue, through us, for this time and this place.

*F. Mike*