August 10, 2007

Dear Friend:

While on vacation this past month and just before the midday Angelus, Pope Benedict XV1 offered some powerful reflections on war. The Holy Father said: "War with the mourning and destruction it brings has always been rightly considered a calamity that contrasts with God's plan. He created everything for existence and, in particular, wants to make a family of the human race." **The Pontiff added: "I feel all the more intensely the impact of the sorrow of the news that comes to me about bloody altercations and episodes of violence that are occurring in so many parts of the world."**

One can safely assume that the Holy Father was referring to the War in Iraq, the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, the horrific genocide in Darfur, the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, and countless other conflicts throughout our world. For over 38 years, our Diocesan Social Action Office has been an instrument of peace and social justice.

Due to the events referenced above, we view the present moment as a critical period in world history. There is indeed a sense of urgency in this moment. The decisions that are made will have tremendous human and economic consequences for millions of our sisters and brothers for years to come. In no small way, they will have a major effect on the moral standing of our country and its relationship with other nations.

Catholic Social Teaching has much to offer all of us in these times of uncertainty. Our teachings on war and peace can inform and inspire us to actions that can change the path our political leaders have taken. All of us are called to be peacemakers. And, our Catholic faith compels us to act.

This is why **we are inviting the Catholic Community to join us in "40 Days of Prayer, Fasting and Actions for Peace." Beginning on the Feast of St. Louis of France (August 25, 2007) and ending on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (October 4, 2007),** we are asking that you join others in spending seven minutes a day in prayer, reflection and actions for peace. We are also inviting you to fast each of the Fridays during this period. **For those who can join us, Bishop Richard Lennon will be celebrating the noon mass at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi for peace in the world.**

Thanks for all you do to support the work of peace and justice.

In Christ,