

Welcome to Pope John Paul II

Most Holy Father,

It is a joy to welcome you to the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen.

Here to greet you are parishioners from throughout the Archdiocese of Baltimore, members of organizations, representatives of Catholic educational and health care institutions – in short the Archdiocese in miniature.

Here, as well, are leaders of other Christian churches, of other faith communities, our Jewish and Muslim neighbors, of the great academic institutions, universities and colleges of this area, elected government officials from our state and city and from the counties within the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and of the mass media of communications. For all of us here, Baltimore and Maryland are special places.

Throughout this area, stretching from the Chesapeake to Western Maryland, the heritage of parish life, of health care ministry, of higher education, together with more recent, multiple ecclesial ministries, inspire and involve men and women of faith in witness and in service. Through outreach to the hungry and the homeless, personal and pastoral ministry to the sick, including an ever growing number of those who have AIDS, people live out their baptism and confirmation as they minister to those in need in the name of Jesus.

Catholics have so much to remember. Here St. Elizabeth Ann Seton opened her first school. Here St. John Neumann served as pastor. Here Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange founded the first community of religious women of African descent anywhere in the world. They taught children from the first African-American Catholic community in the original 13 states which in time became a parish, another first.

Here has flourished from the earliest days of our diocese extraordinary efforts at ecumenical and interfaith cooperation. Here, ecumenically, in the name of Jesus in the part of the city where so many experience the pain of the “Fourth World” our parishes work with other congregations, our Catholic Charities, and people of good will to reach out to those who suffer.

In this city we rejoice at effort in common to advance moral values in public education, to combat violence, to try to build bridges between the community of faith and that of the arts, between people of deep religious beliefs and those committed to academic and scientific research.

Here in many areas through a partnership between government and people of faith, working on an interreligious bases, efforts at providing housing for the poor, food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless have been carried forward.

Holy Father, we welcome you as one who has given a special witness to all the world for principles of justice and peace, very especially for your work on behalf of the culture of life and of religious freedom. We are delighted to say that in this community, Pope John Paul II we love you.