



La Santa Sede

Dear brother and sister,

For one hundred years, the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York harbor has served as a symbol of hope to millions of refugees and immigrants from throughout the world. We can imagine what this welcoming symbol must have meant and must still mean to the tired, poor, uprooted people of the world.

It is most appropriate that you are beginning the centenary celebration of this monument with thanksgiving to God, the source of all life, liberty and love. Many of those who looked to this beacon sought bread, but they realized too that "Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God".

The freedom to acknowledge publicly our dependence upon God is one of the most precious rights we have. In God we have our origin; in God is our destiny; in him must be our comfort and our strength. The citizens of the United States pledge allegiance to the flag of "one nation under God". Today's gathering of so many men and women of different races, of different national origins and of different faiths in a common act of prayer is a sign that the descendants of the immigrants both value and take advantage of the freedom they enjoy.

My prayer today is that the Statue of Liberty, that gift from the people of France to the people of the United States one hundred years ago, may continue to serve not only as a symbol of hope but as a symbol of faith, of that religious faith which brought so many to your shores and which continues to be the most precious heritage of its citizens. God bless America!

