

FROM THE PASTOR

HURRAY FOR FREEDOM!

Several years back when I was a pastor at Sacred Heart, I had the opportunity to take a class trip with the sixth grade to Philadelphia. Philadelphia is certainly what can be called a very historical city. On that one day, we viewed Betsy Ross's house (she sewed the first flag), the grave of Benjamin Franklin and the Liberty Bell. The highlight of the tour in my estimation was the trip to Independence Hall. It was in that very hall on July 2nd (not on July 4th) as the guide told us, that the Declaration of Independence was voted on and approved. Actually, though, it was not really signed until a month later!

No matter what day it actually happened, we Americans declared our independence from the British. That is what we celebrate on the Fourth of July with all those fireworks and parades! The Declaration of Independence is a remarkable document written by Thomas Jefferson. In the second paragraph, we read these famous words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—three goals that our founding fathers envisioned for America 245 years ago. We might ask ourselves if these lofty goals are being realized in our current American society. First of all, the right to life; that is the most basic of all rights - the right to "be". And yet sadly, the United States Supreme Court enshrined into law in 1973 the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision which made abortion legal in this land. Since that time, statistics tell us that over 60 million abortions have been performed in the United States. 60 million lives snuffed out; 60 million pre-born children deprived of this basic right.

As the late President Ronald Reagan once said, "simple morality dictates that unless and until someone can prove the unborn human is not alive, we must give it the benefit of the doubt and assume that it is alive and that it should be entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Makes sense, doesn't it? As a society, we should examine our conscience and reflect upon why morally speaking we are depriving the most vulnerable and defenseless, the basic right first delineated in the Declaration of Independence long ago!

Secondly, liberty; liberty means freedom. Too often freedom in our land today means the ability to do whatever you want. Actually, liberty or freedom means the ability to do what we ought to do in observance with the laws of God. We should seek our freedom within the laws of God and not outside them. In our country today, many people want to do whatever they want without reference to moral standards. That kind of "freedom" will only bring chaos and disorder into our society as we have seen in the last year!

Finally, the pursuit of happiness; the United States is one of the most prosperous nations on the face of this earth. Most of our forefathers who came to this country were seeking what has been called the "American Dream". And for the most part, they found it here. Although the streets were not paved in gold, we have a standard of living here in the USA that is the envy of many in the world.

But the pursuit of happiness should not just be equated with the accumulation of wealth and material goods. May we use our riches not selfishly, but rather with a view to helping those less fortunate around us - the poor, the hungry and the marginal in our society. As we celebrate July 4th this Sunday, let us pray for our nation that it might truly reflect the ideals of the founders and the rights they espoused!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jerome