

Homily

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - July 3-4, 2021

Deacon Jim Olshefski

"They are a rebellious house. Rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day." These words of the Lord, spoken to Ezekiel about the Hebrew nation in today's first reading, could just as easily have been spoken 245 years ago by King George III of Great Britain in reference to the American colonists.

The fire of independence that was sparked by our rebellious American ancestors so long ago had, as its foundation, what was subsequently called Judeo-Christian values and ethics. This is evidenced by wording in the Declaration of Independence in which we affirm that we are "one people...(who) assume the equal station to which...Nature's God entitle[s] [us]...that all men are created equal...endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable rights...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Additionally, the concluding words of the Declaration call upon the signers to "support...this Declaration with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence" as they "pledge[d] to each other [their] lives, [their] fortunes and [their] sacred honor."

Trusting in God through faith, for over 245 years as a democratic republic, our nation has done a great deal to further human civilization, by championing:

- Freedom to worship
- Government by consent of the governed
- Public education to cultivate a literate and well-informed electorate
- Fusing of many different nationalities in a single society, known as the melting pot, and
- The fight against tyranny in two World Wars and the Cold War plus the reconstruction of much of the world, through the Marshall Plan, after World War II.

But our nation is not without its faults. An example is racism and bigotry which have raised their ugly heads throughout our history. Just look at the unjust treatment afforded any number of ethnic minorities: Blacks, Irish and Italian immigrants, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and even Catholics.

However, I believe that, overall, the world is better-off as a result of the existence of our nation, a nation with a Judeo-Christian foundation, whose birthday we celebrate today.

But, just as Jesus and his teachings were rejected in today's Gospel, I fear that our nation, in recent years, is headed down a road in which Christian traditions and values are being eroded and rejected. Many Americans are lacking in faith and even taking offense at those who follow the teachings of Jesus and proclaim the Gospel message:

- Respect for life from conception to natural death is diminishing.
- A "me-first culture" sometimes seems to override the common good resulting in unjust inequalities in our society.

Given the current polarized political climate in our country, in which many have lost the ability to listen to opposing points of view and have a civil conversation with those who disagree with them, many of the most pressing issues of our day cannot even be discussed, let alone addressed.

What's the solution? What can we, Catholic individuals, do to change the course? One thing that each of us can do is to become more familiar with the principles of Catholic social teaching, which, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops "is a central and essential element of our faith." As faithful Catholics, we should advocate their implementation in our country. These basic principles are:

- Life and dignity of the human person
- Solidarity
- Care for God's creation

- Call to family, community and participation
- Option for the poor and vulnerable
- Rights and responsibilities, and the
- Dignity of work and rights of workers.

(Links, in both English and Spanish, of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are found below.)

If we understand these principles and become actively involved in the public discussion, we will help bring to fruition the words of our founding fathers in the Declaration of Independence which I referenced earlier:

We are "one people...(who) assume the equal station to which...Nature's God entitles [us]...that all men are created equal...endowed by [our] Creator with certain unalienable rights...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

On this 4th of July, let us be grateful for the many blessings we receive as American citizens and let's become more engaged to make our community and this nation even better places to live, learn, work and worship.

May God bless the United States of America!

Links:

[CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING](#)

[LA ENSEÑANZA SOCIAL CATÓLICA](#)