

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 4 July 2021

Scriptures: Ezekiel 2:2-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Mark 6:1-6

Homily: Fr. Ken

This weekend we are celebrating Independence Day, the 245th anniversary of the adoption of that remarkable text, the *Declaration of Independence*, by the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia in 1776.

In previous years, the 8th grade students of our St. Rita School, on their trip to Washington, D.C., personally viewed the original document.

Our nation's founders certainly hoped that their eloquent words and lofty principles would endure. But they were well aware that maintaining those values would require long-term vigilance.

As Thomas Paine warned: "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must undergo the fatigues of supporting it".

Benjamin Franklin, himself, as he later left the Constitutional Convention of 1787, was asked what type of government had just been created. He responded: "A republic, if you can keep it".

As we reflect on who we are as a people, and on how far we still need to go in fulfilling our nation's goals and mission, we are inspired by the scripture readings.

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of humility and acknowledging weakness. He says: "I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, and persecutions, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

It is a reminder to us, that true greatness is achieved through living in humility and truth.

It is in that spirit of humility and truth that we express our gratitude recognizing where we have been, where we are today, and where we are going into the future.

Today we celebrate justice, peace, and equality, the realization of which continues to be a challenge. Indeed, the issue of equality continues to loom large today.

Fifty-seven years ago, we celebrated the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the legislation of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson that bans discrimination in accommodations, employment, and education. Recent events nationwide remind us that while progress has been made, we have a long journey ahead toward fulfillment.

Among the freedoms we celebrate is the freedom of religion. We may have taken that for granted, but if we have, we have done it without a knowledge of history, both past and present.

The numbers are shocking. Pope Francis recently stated that more Christians are suffering today than ever before. He said that the 21st century has witnessed more Christians under siege for their religious faith than during the entire time of the centuries of early Church persecutions. Today, over 100,000 Christians are killed each year simply because of their Christian faith. And 200,000 more are denied fundamental human rights.

So, on this Independence Day weekend, while we celebrate our freedom of religion, and all the freedoms that we have, we need to remember and pray for our Christian sisters and brothers throughout our world who continue to suffer persecution for their faith, that they will be sustained by the example of the martyrs of the early Church, and sustained by our daily prayers and by our outstretched love for them.

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