

INDEPENDENCE DAY/V TRINITY 2018
SERMON-SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
DEUT. 10.17-21 St. MATT. 5.43-48

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GOD, HELP US TO ALWAYS USE OUR LIBERTIES AND FREEDOM TO DO WHAT IS GOOD AND RIGHT...AND TO ALWAYS PRAY AND WORK FOR PEACE.

The author of the Independence Day Collect was Bishop Edward Lambe Parsons (1868-1960). It reflects the spirit of the two other prayers he wrote for the 1928 Revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*...those for 'Social Justice' and 'For the Family of Nations'.

In the Collect we acknowledge God is Eternal...he exists without beginning or ending...and he is the source of our liberties...and he guided our forefathers in winning the liberties we cherish.

Since it's founding in 1977, the clergy of Saint Joseph Parish have assiduously avoided introducing partisan politics...whether Church or secular...into the life of the Parish. Why? Because they would divide and ultimately destroy the Parish! The Corinthians tried that approach...Holy Scripture is clear on what happened to them.

That doesn't mean as Anglican Catholic Christians we are or should try to be apolitical...or that we are not affected by policies clearly that do not agree with Holy Scripture and God's purpose.

We enjoy liberties in this country citizens in other countries don't have. In some countries, Christians are being targeted with violence and killed for practicing the Faith.

No government official checked the contents of this sermon and gave me permission to preach...none of us were watched as we came to Mass this morning. But we shouldn't take our civil and religious liberties for granted. We must do what we ask in the Collect...pray God will help us use our liberties and freedom for the right reasons...and pray and work for peace in our country and throughout the world.

Benjamin Franklin once wrote that for America to work its citizens had to be virtuous. For peace and justice to become a reality, we need to do good things, not just

talk about them. We need to show kindness and compassion toward each other, especially to those less fortunate. We do this as a Parish...and we do this individually...and we must extend that work into the community and other parts of the world...using the gifts of time and money God has given us.

The Prayer Book is not apolitical either. During every Mass we pray for all Christian rulers and magistrates...that includes our own political leaders regardless of party affiliation. There is no opt-out clause. We may not agree with our President or Governor or other elected official on certain policies. But we must pray God will guide them to do what is right and good. And we pray for Peace throughout the world in the Collects at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Benjamin Franklin was a product of the Enlightenment and his political and religious views reflect that influence. But we can see in what he wrote the practical application of what Saint James wrote in his Epistle...the Church has to be about the business of being the Church, of showing compassion and love toward others, of taking care of widows and orphans (that really means anyone who needs help), of feeding the hungry, of housing the homeless, of praying for peace everywhere, just as the Lesson from Deuteronomy tells us we should always be doing.

Independence Day is more than fireworks displays and flag-waving and a paid day off from work...as great as those things are. Independence Day reminds us liberties and freedom are not entirely free...they come with a cost...sometimes a huge cost...in the lives of those who have died protecting our liberties and freedom.

If we try to use our liberties and freedom to do what is good and right...and to always pray and work for peace...we are getting close to what Jesus asks us to do in today's Gospel...

...BE PERFECT AS OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT!

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