

From the Pastor's Desktop

A Message from Father Charles Puthota

June 30, 2024



Dear Parishioners of St. Elizabeth,

Independence Day: French Aristocrat, diplomat, and historian, Alexis de Tocqueville, who travelled in America in the early 1831 said: "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great. ... America is a land of wonders, in which everything is in constant motion and every change seems an improvement." The goodness of America is a shining light to the whole world. As we celebrate our nation's Independence Day on Fourth of July and enjoy the weekend with barbecues, parades, and parties, I recall the day some years ago when I took the oath to become a citizen of this country. I was filled with happiness and pride. My friend, Nita Ricotta, accompanied me to this ceremony held in a theater in Oakland. The place was filled with a few thousand people. I discovered how these people from over 100 different countries were all excited and eager to become American citizens. There was a great sense of elation and jubilation in everyone. Before the oath was administered, people in the hall were asked to stand country by country and introduced to everyone else. People exhibited great pride in belonging to those different countries. But they were at the same time eager and excited to become the citizens of this nation, the land of the free and the home of the brave. When the oath was administered, all these people from different corners of the world were merged into the heart and soul of this nation. The joy of these new citizens was deep and intense. They were waving the American flags boisterously; many were shedding tears. It was a sight to behold. It was a powerful demonstration of what this nation stands for: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

There is something beautiful and powerful that this nation has to offer to people all over the world. What is it that makes this nation so attractive to other nations? What is this thing that we call the "American Dream"? Obviously, it's just not the material things. This country offers everyone possibilities and opportunities to strive, progress, and excel. This Independence Day, we could all resolve---natives and the naturalized citizens---not to take the blessings of this nation for granted. Let's join the 341.8 million others in the U.S. as we sing and pray: "America! America! God shed His grace on thee, And crown thy good with brotherhood, From sea to shining sea!... America! America! God mend thine ev'ry flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law!... America! America! May God thy gold refine, Till all success be nobleness, And ev'ry gain divine!"

Quotes on America: "America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination, and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand" --- Harry S. Truman. "Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists" --- Franklin D. Roosevelt. "From every mountain side, let freedom ring" --- Samuel F. Smith. "This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in" --- Theodore Roosevelt Happy Independence Day! God bless America!

Word of God: 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time: The gospel is a “sandwich” account of two healings. The first one about Jairus’ daughter is interrupted by the woman afflicted with hemorrhages. Jesus gives healing and new life. God’s power goes out of Jesus to bring about the healing and restoration of life. God in Jesus Christ wants us to have health, happiness, long life, and eternal life. The first reading from Wisdom extols that “God formed man to be imperishable, the image of his own nature he made him.” Through sin and evil we have been affected badly, but God always is willing to restore us to our fullness of glory. It is his will that we reflect the image and likeness of God our Father.

Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, Wednesday July 3: The so-called “doubting Thomas” was also the one who made one of the greatest statements of faith when he surrendered to Jesus, proclaiming him “my Lord and my God.” I owe my personal faith to St. Thomas who is believed to have travelled all the way to India to preach the good news and to give his life as witness to Christ. Thomas was a person full of courage. When Jesus suggested that they go to Bethany, after Lazarus’ death, a move that would have trapped him into the den of his enemies, Thomas said “Let’s also go to die with him.” (Jn 11:16b). When Thomas asks Jesus, “Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?” it elicits a memorable definition of Jesus’ identity: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn 14:5-6). Thomas represents the modern person of science seeking proofs and empirical evidence. The reason he demanded it was that he may have been hurt and let down by the death of Jesus, something that was too hard for him to accept. He may not have been willing to accept the news of the resurrection easily so as not to be taken for a ride. But all that changed when Jesus played along with his need for him to put his finger and hand into the wounds of Jesus. By Jesus’ wounds, Thomas was healed. In the sufferings of Jesus, ongoing in the world of today, we might quite possibly recognize Jesus and come to faith in him. May the feast of St. Thomas inspire us to be able to bear witness to Christ with courage and generosity.

Humor: 1. After a morning worship service, a mother with a fidgety seven-year-old boy told her Pastor how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, “If you won’t be quiet, the Pastor is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!” It worked. 2. During a state visit to Great Britain, President Ronald Reagan went horseback riding with Queen Elizabeth. At one point, one of the horses passed gas quite loudly. The queen apologized, saying, “There are some things even royalty can’t control.” Reagan replied, “I’m glad you told me, or I would have thought it was the horse.”

Happy Independence Day!

Your Friend and Pastor,

Father Charles Puthota