

Companions on the Journey

July 5, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ

Two hundred and forty-four years ago yesterday, the Founders of our great country signed a Declaration of Independence and thereby resigned as a territory of the British Empire. Those thirteen original states in what the British referred to as The Colonies had come to the point that they were willing to fight for what they believed in and perhaps die for what they believed in. And many did fight, and many did die. And we who live now are the recipients, the beneficiaries of that great decision and those great sacrifices.

Red, white, and blue—they were the colors of the new flag of this nascent country “born on the Fourth of July” as the lyrics go. A star for each state. A place on the flag for each state. Our flag, Old Glory, is a reminder of all that has transpired from that time to this. There have been good times and bad times. There have been times of war and times of peace. There have been depressions and recessions. There has been unity and there has been secession. There have been flu epidemics and corona-virus pandemics.

We have survived it all. But not without toil. Not without sacrifice. Not without the whole body of Americans pitching in together to make it happen. We are not allowed to relegate that responsibility to another. We are not allowed to delegate that task to somebody else. If we want to live in the freest country on the face of the earth then we each must make a contribution to that freedom, for the common good. There is no America without sacrifice. And I do not mean that “someone else” has to make sacrifices. I mean that I have to make sacrifices and you have to make sacrifices. And I do not mean just occasionally or only some of the time. I mean all the time and I mean all the people. We cannot afford to begin to think that I have done my part, now it is someone else’s turn. No. It is always my turn for as long as I draw breath. It is a mindset thing. Not someone else. Me. You. Together.

Not everyone came to these shores of their own free will. And yet they are here or their great grandchildren are here. Not everyone came here with all their papers in order. And yet they are here and some have been here for a generation and strive to make a contribution to be part of the greatest nation on the face of the earth. Not everyone came here to stay here but here we all are. The question still remains: Can we all truly be independent? Our Independence has been declared but our Interdependence has to be lived out, on a daily basis. We must hold each other accountable but we must not forsake our sharing in the responsibilities that make this country great. We must accuse less and help out more. We must pay less attention to the personal cost and focus more on the virtue that freedom is—something to be held in highest honor, something to be willing to live for and even die for. We have to listen for the voices of those who want to be as free as we are but do not yet experience that freedom in a real and safe way. We have to be reminded that all of us came from people who came here, however that happened, because they yearned to be free. Perhaps we have to think through again the sacrifices necessary for our nation truly to be one nation, under God with liberty and justice FOR ALL. That is what we say when we pledge our allegiance to our flag. We don’t talk so much like that anymore but America would be even better if we did. Happy Fourth.

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Peace,
Monsignor McHenry