

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**July 2, 2017**

This weekend our nation celebrates 241 years since our founding fathers declared their independence. They wrote: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.”

This weekend stands out as one of the most joyous and effusive times of the year. We have Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving, there is Memorial Day and Labor Day that are the bookends of summer. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is in the middle of all of this. It comes at a time when weather in Wisconsin is at its best. Family and friends come together and communities rally with fireworks, music and dance. Life is good and it comes to its fullest expression on a day like this.

In spite of the contentious nature of our politics and in spite of the ways we contradict ourselves, at the core of it all is the working of God. We are endowed by our Creator. In God we trust. God bless America.

The splendor of the fireworks and sometimes great oratory associated with this day amaze us and capture our fullest attention. The gospel amazes us as well. The extravagant character of such an outrageous demand leaves us speechless. Jesus says, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.”

On the fourth of July many stories are told about the ultimate sacrifices made in the defense of our country. How much more so are we called to the defense of our faith? What is at stake is the supreme good, our eternal salvation, and the defense of absolute truth.

There is huge pressure these days to obliterate any moral authority. In the name of freedom, there are strong voices to promote and defend the most outlandish aberrations. They say that we have no right to impose our values on others. They claim discrimination. They claim that there is no right or wrong. That what is right for one might be wrong for another and so therefore anything goes and anyone can decide for themselves what is true and what is not.

No wonder we have such a dysfunctional society. As Pontius Pilate said to Jesus in a sarcastic and dismissive way, he said, truth, what is truth?

As we celebrate political freedom and independence this week, may we also recommit ourselves with all our heart to taking up the cross of Jesus and following him.