

Celebrating ‘Declaration Day’

On July 4, we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence and call it Independence Day. Actually, our independence came seven years later, in 1783. On July 4, 1776, we made a declaration of our basic principles, and so the holiday should really be called “Declaration Day.”

Our Founding Fathers declared first of all that all men were created equal. This powerful statement acknowledges that we are created by God and that all else comes from Him. It was God who created us equal, with no preference for ancestry, skin color, gender or other distinction. They echoed the biblical statement that, in Christ, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28, BSB).

Second, they declared that it was God who endowed us with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. No one can take our life, because “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1John 5:11b). In the same way, it is the Spirit of the Lord who gives us freedom (2 Cor. 3:17), not to indulge ourselves, but to serve others in love (Gal. 6:13). The Lord gives us the choice of which path to follow in pursuit of happiness (Deut. 30:19), but He guides us to happiness by showing us that life, prosperity and honor come from pursuit of righteousness and love (Prov. 21:21).

In the many years since 1776, our nation has struggled to live up to the principles declared by our Founding Fathers. The stain of slavery and racism, denying God’s declaration of equality, has only now begun to disappear from society. Even so, the scars remain and more work needs to be done to bring the American dream to our needy communities.

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Then there are also those who have forgotten that our rights come from God, denying Him and looking to the state as their source of rights and happiness. They have also forgotten that godless revolutions like the French Revolution and the communist revolution led only to poverty and enslavement by the state. As attacks mount from these totalitarian, anti-Christian forces, we stand in grave danger of losing the God-given rights and freedoms declared so eloquently in 1776.

It's time to turn things around.

Let us start with ourselves and join the Founding Fathers in their declarations:

- God created us, and everything good comes from Him.
- God created us equal, to be one in Christ.

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- God has given us the right to life through Christ.
- God has given us freedom so that we might serve others.
- God has given us the right to pursue genuine happiness through righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray that the church will recapture the spirit of Declaration Day and pass it on to a nation desperately in need of real equality, life, liberty and happiness.

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