

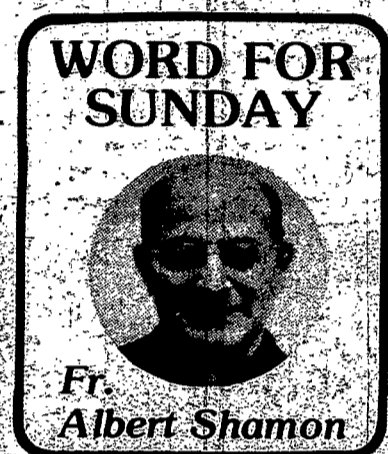
A Declaration of Independence: Sunday

By MARY LOU ANDRYCHUK

For many people in the United States this Sunday, July 4, is the focal point of the entire year. It marks for Americans two hundred years of freedom to live, choose, and seek happiness. For Christians in particular it offers a good opportunity to reflect on this freedom in terms of our faith life.

The Judaeo-Christian tradition proposes not simply an annual or centennial focus for celebrating liberation, but a weekly focus: the Sabbath Day, or Sunday. This is the day that marks our being set free by the Lord, free from sin and death by the resurrection of Jesus. "This is the day that the Lord has made!" we often sing. Made for what? For whom? For us!

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WORD FOR SUNDAY

Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 14:23-29, (R1) Is. 32:15-20; (R2) 1 Pt. 1:3-9

Sunday we celebrate our 200th anniversary as a nation.

When Jews celebrate their Passover, the youngest child asks, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" So we may ask, why is a bicentennial year different from all other years?

Well, many years ago, the fathers of our country signed a piece of paper called the Declaration of Independence. "Independence" means "growing up and being on our own."

Our founding fathers wanted America to be the best, so they made some rules and wrote them down. Because they remembered to pray, the Spirit of God was with them. They called the paper with rules The Constitution. For 200 years, Americans have listened and tried to obey it.

The Constitution tells us that "all men are created equal."

It says "all men" — that is, everybody, each and everyone, you and me.

"Are created" — that is, are specially made, custom built, made by God's own hand.

"Equal" — that is, everyone is important, whether born or unborn, whether big or little, rich or poor, black, white, yellow, brown or red. Everyone is special! That's the way God planned it. That was how our Constitution spelled it out 200 years ago.

So we ought to celebrate 200 years of trying to discover that "a man's a man for a 'that'."

A bicentennial celebration must focus on three things: our Heritage (the past); Celebration (the present); and Horizons (the future).

A religious celebration must have the same focus.

For our Heritage we owe God adoration. A man is never so tall as when he kneels before God. Never more dependable than when he

INSIGHTS On Pastoral Liturgy

We were taught in school to "keep holy the Lord's Day" — one of the Ten Commandments. So what did we do? We went to Mass and abstained from servile work. Today we're down to going to Mass, and often just to get it over with. But celebrating freedom and keeping holy should surely prompt something more creative, more exciting, and certainly more fulfilling!

If we could only think of Sunday as God's special gift of the week to us instead of another set of rules. What would it be like? A day of rest? A day of being free? A day of being holy? A day of being whole?

depends on God. Never so strong as when he draws upon God's strength. Doubters, men of science, materialists will not save liberty; only men of faith, of deep religious convictions, for only men who rely on God are reliable men.

For our Heritage we must also ask God's forgiveness. For every gift there is a corresponding duty. Lincoln said: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven, we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity, we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us." Lord, have mercy!

For our present, we owe God thanksgiving. What a providential coincidence that our bicentennial falls on Sunday! Isn't this telling us something? The Eucharist is thanksgiving. Is the decline in Sunday Mass attendance a proof Lincoln was right?

Lastly, for the future — what? The dim unknown lies in the hands of God. Therefore it behooves us to invoke in prayer the Lord of History, guardian and guide of the destinies of nations.

Father, a handful of courageous men in a moment of danger pledged their lives, fortunes and honor to proclaim a nation whose citizens' rights were based, not upon the nod of king or ruler, but upon creation at Your hands.

Grant to the Executive branch a ministry of service to all, not the few.

To the Congress the upholding of public interest over competing private claims.

To the Judiciary a wisdom in interpreting the law grounded in principle, not in expediency.

Pour Your Spirit out upon us so that we may become active in the affairs of government.

May our nation use its mighty power for the healing of differences among nations with justice and mercy and love. Amen.

A day of just being? For each person, each family, it would be different, no doubt. But for members of the Christian Community, those whose common bond is freedom in Christ, there should be some common elements.

Sunday is the Lord's Day. But the Lord's Day for us. It's a day for us to meet the Lord, to come in touch with the Holy. It is a time for letting the Holy in us. Sunday is a day for being wholly ourselves as we let ourselves be holy. It is a day for just being and letting others be: giving rest to ourselves and to all of creation from whom we demand so much the other six days of the week.

Sunday is the setting for the coming together of the Christian community in Eucharist, in thanksgiving. It is a time for remembering who we are as followers of Christ, a time to encourage and strengthen one another in faith so that we can meet the challenges to that faith.

We say the setting for this gathering because one hour at Mass, which often presents us with a myriad of demands itself — listening, responding, reaching out, focusing in — preceded by hectic

Karl Fuchs Gets Joseph Award

Karl F. Fuchs, president of Alliance Tool and Die Corp., has been named the first recipient of the Joseph Award, to be given annually by St. Joseph's Villa.

The presentation was made at Silver Stadium last week by Sister Ann Vincent, director of the villa.

At the presentation, she noted "because of your love and concern for the people of your firm and for your fellowmen, we regard you as a bridge builder between the business world and the world of human services."

Retreats Set At Cenacle

Father James Fallon, director of renewal programs for the Diocese of Syracuse and head of the Emmaus Charismatic House of Prayer, will give a Pentecostal Retreat Aug. 6-9, at the Cenacle Retreat House.

Father Angelo Caligiuri will lead a five-day retreat for Sisters and lay women Aug. 13-18 also at the retreat house. Father Caligiuri is the Vicar for Religious for the Diocese of Buffalo and is a professor of anthropology at his diocese's seminary.

Further information and reservations are available through Sister Marie Halligan at the Cenacle, 271-8755.

preparations and followed by frantic dispersions to the next event, simply cannot provide the complete environment for real Sunday-keeping that we need. We need this hour to formalize and express together what we mean our lives to be about, but we also need to prepare for it at home by prayer and the pace of our activities, and to continue it afterward by the choices we make.

Choosing to let go of all the demands of the week behind or the week ahead, choosing to be free from the worries, the busy-ness, the expectations and the disappointments of our lives for just this one day can be a very liberating experience. The only condition is our willingness to step out of the rhythm of our culture that pre-determines what we do and how we do it. It will probably require a little courage, too, to declare our independence from shopping centers and televisions, washing machines, lawn-mowers, and meetings.

If freedom is honestly the mark of the American people and truly the sign of the sons and daughters of God, this reverence for Sunday ought to be characteristic of our parishes, our families, our very selves. Liturgy committees can be resourceful and inspirational catalysts in helping the rest of the parish to grow toward this Sunday Independence.

The Liturgical Conference in Washington, D.C. offers some fine suggestions for summer programs and key liturgical celebrations for families and parishes in their summer issue of Major Feasts and Seasons, a seasonal subscription series. In addition, the December 1975 issue of Liturgy, the conference's journal, is devoted to the

topic of "Sunday" and would be a good springboard for discussion.

Perhaps, as we celebrate the freedoms won for us by the Founding Fathers of America, this is a good weekend to begin thinking about the implications of independence for Sunday in our lives today.

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