

COLUMNISTS

Thank God for freedom

14 Sunday of the Year: (R3) Matthew 11:25-30. (R1) Zechariah 9:9-10. (R2) Romans 8:9, 11-13.

July 4, 1776, is really not Independence Day but rather our Declaration of Independence Day — merely signing the declaration did not establish our independence. It took seven years of struggle before the Constitution could be written.

Have we forgotten the struggle involved in this noble experiment of democracy? Do we cherish this land or do we shy away from a word like "patriotism" because it has been co-opted by the fanatic fringe? To be "patriotic" is not to be blind to our nation's sins. Like all nations, we too have our weak points.

We love our country, but none of us believe it is perfect. When America is in the wrong, we need to speak up. Not to would be a lack of patriotism. To be patriotic means to appreciate the sacrifices of our forefathers and our foremothers who wanted this nation to be great. Many of them gave their lives that we might be free as a people. We must maintain and improve what has been won for us and given to us.

First, we should remember our own roots. Most Americans are descendants of those "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" that Emma Lazarus wrote about in her poem etched on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. "Give me your tired," wrote Emma, "your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Except for our Native American friends, we are a nation of immigrants. Maybe that is why it has been our tradition as a nation to welcome the stranger with kindness and compassion. We must never forget our own origins.

Secondly, we ought to remember what we stand for.

Growing up in the black ghetto of Baltimore, young Thurgood Marshall was an early, though unwilling, student of the U.S. Constitution. Often involved in mischief, he was required to stay after school and memorize a portion of the Constitution. As a result, Marshall reported he soon knew the whole thing by heart. Marshall's primary school teachers would have been astonished if they could have foreseen that their unruly pupil would one day put that knowledge into practice as the nation's first African-American United States

Supreme Court Justice.

Wouldn't it be great if every American child could know our Constitution by heart? The Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights. We could add another document — the Bible. The words on the Statue of Liberty remind us where we came from. The words in our sacred documents tell us what we stand for.

The third thing we must never forget is the sacrifices made by others so that we could be free. Years ago, Dick Abel came face-to-face with several prisoners of the Vietnam War. Abel was the first American these prisoners had seen after being held captive for more than eight years. Some of the men had been in solitary confinement for four years. Later, Abel stood in awe as he heard the leader of the POWs speak for the group a message to the free world.

"Thank you for the privilege of serving," the leader said. "God bless America!"

Don't think that there are no heroes left in this world. There are many men and women in this generation and in each generation over the past 200 plus years who have literally been willing to lay down their lives for this country. And we owe them a great debt.

So often what is behind the bravery of these people is their faith in God. Faith helps us to live our commitment to freedom. For it is in giving that we receive.

In Jesus' time, oxen were linked together by means of a wooden yoke across their

necks that helped to distribute the weight of a load so that both oxen carried it. Together, they were able to pull far greater a load than either one could pull by itself.

When we are yoked to Christ, we are better able to stand up for the things we believe. When we are yoked to Christ, we are better able to repay the sacrifices made in our behalf. So on Independence Day thank God for our freedom to worship and for those who made it possible for us to worship in freedom this day. God bless America.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, July 5
Genesis 28:10-22 Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday, July 6
Genesis 32:23-33; Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday, July 7
Genesis 41:55-57, 42:5-7, 17-24; Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday, July 8
Genesis 44:18-21, 23-29, 45:1-5; Matthew 10:7-15

Friday, July 9
Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30; Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday, July 10
Genesis 49:29-32, 50:15-26; Matthew 10:24-33

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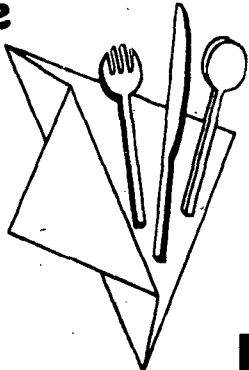
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Daily Specials



Kids' Answers from page 12

1. barley, 2. figs, 3. grapes, 4. melons, 5. olives, 6. wheat, 7. nuts, 8. apples, 9. beans, 10. garlic, 11. onions, 12. herbs



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