

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis**  
**Independence Day, July 4th, 2018, Cycle B**

You may be wondering why I chose the particular scripture passages we just read for this 4<sup>th</sup> of July Mass. The reason is because I believe these scriptures reaffirm vital values we need to be reminded of as Christians who gather to celebrate this Independence Day of the United States.

Our first reading from the Book of Genesis' second creation story reminds us that we all come from the hand of God. Into each human being, God has blown the breath of life, and thus the starting principle for Catholics is that every human being has God-given dignity and is worthy of respect. Or, in the words of our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Respect for each other as human beings seems in such short supply as we celebrate this Independence Day. Our lack of civility toward each other is so pervasive any more, the language with each other so crude, the insults fly so freely, we Christians really need to be reminded of the civility of our faith calls us to as we celebrate the birth of our great nation.

Paul the Apostle tells us we grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with all our bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling of each other. Paul urges us to be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. He says, "be imitators of God...living in love for one another"...as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us. Indeed Jesus' command in the Gospel we heard is "love one another as I love you." "As I love you"—that is we live lives of pouring ourselves out in service to each other.

There is so little compassion, so little forgiveness, so little real love in America or anywhere really! Yet our faith calls us as Christians to live out of a love that accords each human being with the dignity and respect they deserve—to be civil with each other.

Our Constitution as a nation, our democratic and republican institutions are based upon the premise that we be civil with each other. Unfortunately, the cultural headwinds against civility and respect for each other as human beings are strong. The screaming heads on cable news, the fortunes poured into overly partisan electioneering, and the "Wild West" of social media make it difficult to engage in reasonable dialogue and even for Christians to live the values Paul the Apostle and Jesus called us to.

I believe this July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday calls us (especially Catholic Christians) to stop, take a breather, and spend some time reflecting on what makes us as a nation great—it is not our wealth, it is not our military power, not because of our vast resources, it is not because we are a so-called superpower. What makes us great is what our values as followers of Jesus call us to, and again, through the genius of Thomas Jefferson was enshrined in those first few words of our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Why? Because as Genesis puts it: into each of us God has blown the breath of life. Remember your values the next time you are tempted to hurl a caustic diatribe at someone with whom you passionately disagree with.

God bless our great land, and may God bless us with a bright future.