

Reflection for the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

He spoke to us a message of peace and taught us to live as brothers and sisters. His message took form in the vision of our founding fathers as they fashioned a nation where we might live as one. From the Preface for Independence Day

Today as a Nation we here in the United States of America celebrate Independence Day. This year as the restrictions from the pandemic are reduced in our State and many other States, the idea of celebrating Independence Day can take on more significance role this year than in the more recent past. For Masses that are celebrated on July 4th that are not part of a Sunday Obligation in the Dioceses of the United States there is a special collect, prayer over the offerings, preface, prayer after communion and solemn blessing that can be used for the celebration of Mass. Option 1 of the preface for Independence Day here in the United States truly has a great statement that speaks of the message that Jesus Christ has given all humanity, a message of peace. It is from this message that a vision developed in our founding fathers that fashioned our nation with the firm hope that we might all live as one.

We in many ways can see the founding fathers of our nation as dreamers that formed a nation. To this very day we are striving as a nation to live up not only the dreams of our founding fathers but the dreams of all who live in this land. The dreams and ideals of America offers great promise and hope for all of us who live in this land. Our nation offers a beacon of hope for all humanity throughout the world. In the Declaration of Independence, we find the sentence, *“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.”* This sentence that is contained within the Declaration of Independence is a realization that God the Creator has created us in His image and likeness, and we are all equal in His eyes.

Some people might have a concern that the Declaration of Independence says, “all men” not “all people” or “all men and women”, and therefore the Declaration of Independence left women out. We can turn to the first definition of the singular for “men” which is “man”, and this definition in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary is “a human being.” Many can see the Declaration of Independence as a document that we as a nation need to strive from one generation to the next to live up to.

As faith filled people we can and should see Sacred Scripture as something we must strive to live up to, and in our Gospel reading this Sunday from the Gospel of Mark we have the verse, *“Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, and Joses and Judas and Simon?”* In this third verse of chapter 6 of the Gospel of Mark, we hear of how the people of Nazareth react to Jesus, they are astonished at His teaching, but they are not able to reconcile His teaching with the fact that they know Him and His family. As Catholics we might struggle with the fact that Mark 6:3 mentions that Jesus has brothers and sisters. We should see the challenge with the use of brothers and sisters in Mark as an issue with the Greek word *“adelphos”* which is the original text in the Gospel. This Greek word *“adelphos”* does mean brother, but the meaning of this word is more than just meant to refer to having the same parents. This word is used to describe brothers not born of the same parents and to describe the relationship of cousins. The word kinsman or relative could just as easily been used for the word *“adelphos.”* Using the words “brothers and sisters” in Mark 6:3 can cause some confusion and worry on the part of Catholics, but the use of “brothers and sisters,” helps us understand how well the people knew Jesus and His family. Due to this closeness, they struggled with being open to the message of Christ. There are many reasons why humanity struggles with being open to the message of Christ. At the end of the day, when we reflect on our journey may we not have excuses for not following Christ. May we be like our founding fathers and allow the words of Christ to create a vision in us that we can follow in this world and in the next.