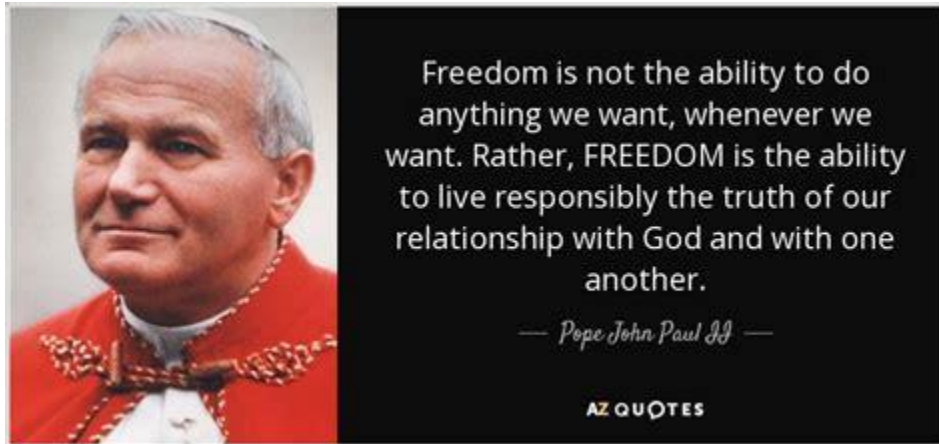


FROM FATHER JOHN: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor.”* ~ Luke 4:18



Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy!!!

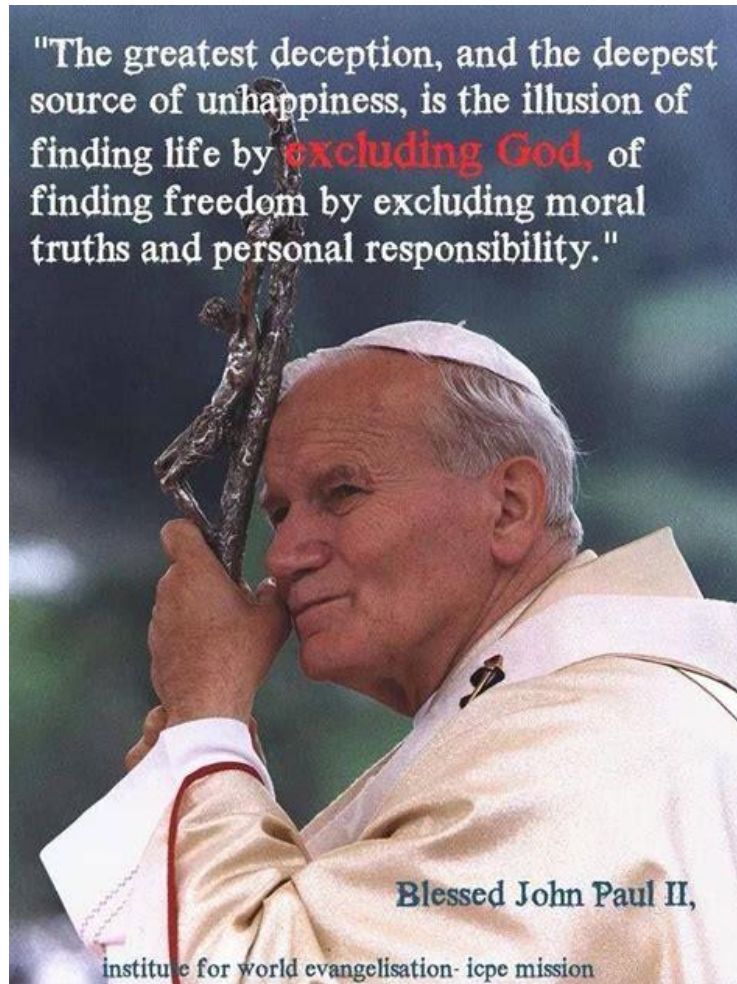
Happy Fourth of July!!! Today, our nation, and our American Catholic Church, celebrate Independence Day which is, along with Thanksgiving Day, one of my two favorite national holidays. I love these two holidays because on Thanksgiving we intentionally thank God for the many graces and blessings He has given to us, our families and our community. But, on July Fourth, Independence Day, we intentionally thank God for the particular grace of Freedom; the *Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* that He has given us in and through these United States of America.

But, even though each of us has so much to be grateful for, we need to remember that we do not give thanks alone but rather as one people, “one nation, under God”. We are a nation founded on the precepts of Christianity, so much so, that the aluminum cap that sits on the top of the Washington Monument has two words inscribed on it. The words are *Laus Deo* which literally means “*Praise be to God*”.

These two words *Laus Deo*, “*Praise be to God*”, often go unnoticed, out of sight and out of mind, but I think it is significant that they our nation has placed them on the top of the monument to George Washington, our first president, the father of our republic. I think it is significant that they are placed on top of the monument that overlooks our nation’s capital, the most powerful city in the world. It is a reminder that each of us, both individually and collectively, as members of our community of faith, have much to be thankful for, have many reasons to give thanks to God who showers us with His graces and blessings.

“And now, bless the God of all, who has done wondrous things on earth; Who fosters people’s growth from their mother’s womb, and fashions them according to his will! May he grant you joy of heart and may peace abide among you; May his goodness toward us endure in Israel to deliver us in our days”. (Sir 50:22 – 24)

I ask everyone in our parish to take time to give thanks to God each and every day for the wonderful nation He has given us.



President Lincoln said, on November 19, 1863 at the site of the Battle of Gettysburg, *“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”* Realizing, as the great Abraham Lincoln realized, while enduring the horrors of the civil war, that God has given us countless blessings, most particularly all those men and women who have given their lives so that you and I can enjoy freedom and liberty, I thought I would close with an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence.

“The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. ...

*We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. **And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.**” (emphasis mine)*

