



Sunday Reflection With Fr. Rafal



Dear St. Joseph Parishioners and Visitors,

Happy Fourth of July! I want to talk about patriotism in relation to Bible teaching. I begin with an anecdote. There was an American visiting his Country of birth and his old neighborhood. One day graffiti appeared on a wall: Yankee, go home, it said. That night the American felt bad. Next day the same graffiti was there: Yankee, go home. But someone had written below: And take me with you!

That illustrates two feelings about our country. On one hand we have past sins that still haunt us. At the same time most of us feel grateful to belong to this country. Many consider us the most desirable country because of our opportunities, our abundance, our freedom.

I am grateful and proud of our country. In saying that I want to point out that the Bible has two different meanings for the word "pride." One type of pride we should reject, the other embrace. Let's start with the bad news: In the Bible pride often means that smug feeling of superiority, thinking that other people are stupid in comparison to me.

Next Sunday we hear about a man who thinks he is more clever than Jesus. Big mistake - as we shall see. Pride often has disastrous results. The Bible says, "pride goes before the fall." Jesus warns that the person who exalts himself will be humbled.

Paul had a lot of things that he could be proud of: his Hebrew heritage, his knowledge of the Scriptures, his enormous labor, but today we hear him say he only wants to boast in the cross of Christ. He takes no pride in the things this world values.

Now while Paul rejects destructive pride, he does acknowledge a place for a good pride. He tells the Corinthians that he takes great pride in them. (7:4) This good pride means affection and gratitude. I can say something similar about you. I have been with you over three years now and I take pride in you.

This good pride can be part of evangelization. Today Jesus sends his disciples two by two to bring in God's harvest. To do this effectively involves some affection, some good pride in each other. I hope you can say, "Come to St. Joseph. We have a pastor who loves us and cares for us. We have a pastor who lifts up Jesus." Being disciple makers involves having an admiration for each other, gratitude, affection.

When we take pride in each other, it's because of gratitude for the blessings we have received and the desire to extend them. Something similar applies to patriotism - pride in our nation.

For today we acknowledge that, like St. Paul, a priest can take pride in his parishioners - and parishioners in their priest - and in each other. Parents can have good pride in their children - and children in their parents. Just so, we can have a good pride in our nation. As Christians, of course, we do not look to our country for salvation. Like Paul we ultimately boast only in the cross.

With that in mind we can say: *God bless this American land that I love...*

And we can pray: *God mend thine every flaw ... Confirm thy soul in self-control ... Thy liberty in law!*

Have a Blessed 4th of July 2022!!

Rev. Rafal Ligenza

Pastor — St. Joseph Parish