

Dear parishioners,

On this July 4th Sunday, we remember when the Continental Congress in 1776 declared that the thirteen colonies were united, free and independent states! As we celebrate this day with family and friends at picnics, parades, at National Park (GO NATS!) and other gatherings, I always encourage folks to take a few moments and recall why “we the people” formed the United States in the first place.

The preamble to our Constitution provides a very clear answer:

We the People of the United States, in Order to:

1. *Form a more perfect Union*
2. *Establish Justice*
3. *Insure domestic Tranquility*
4. *Provide for the common defense*
5. *Promote the general Welfare, and*
6. *Secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity*

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Amazingly, by adding the “general welfare” clause in the Preamble, the Framers recognized that a shared morality is essential to freedom. Having concern for the welfare of others creates trust in a society. When citizens belong to the same moral community, they can work together without constantly being on guard against violence, marginalization, or exploitation. Promoting the general welfare (also known as the “common good”) strengthens relationships, marriages, families, and communities.

The Vatican II document, *Gaudium et spes*, provides a wonderful definition of the common good: “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (GS 26). In order for people “to reach their fulfillment,” *Gaudium et spes* states that every human being ought to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life—food, clothing, housing, the right to work, the right to education and religious freedom.

The selfless principle of the common good stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people. Catholic Social Teaching explains that the “common good can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good...No expression of social life—from the family to intermediate social groups, associations, enterprises, cities, regions, States and nations—can escape the issue of its own common good, in that this is a constitutive element of its significance and **the authentic reason for its very existence** (emphasis added).”

Should you encounter someone this holiday who desires to act on self-interest and reject the selfless common good principle, please remind them of the obligations and “Blessings of Liberty” and send them a copy of our U.S. Constitution:

https://www.senate.gov/civics/resources/pdf/US_Constitution-Senate_Publication_103-21.pdf

Peace and all good,

Deacon Jim