

Giving Thanks for the Independence of the United States!

Cathedral of Saint Matthew – Houston, Texas

Today we come together to give thanks to God for the Independence of the United States!

Each year we remember the patriotic gesture that culminated with the birth of the sovereign state of the United States of America on the fourth of July in 1776!

Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and the fathers of this great country decided to end a great phase of colonial submission to Great Britain, by invoking great principles and truths which are fundamental for a republican and democratic life of this new country.

They established that all men are created equal by God; all have the right to seek justice in their lives, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!

And the Catholic Church offers to us its own readings about the Solemnity of the Day of Independence, it has proposed to us some beautiful texts of Sacred Scriptures which speak to us of Blessing, of Happiness, of Peace, and of Justice!

We have heard in the readings of the Book of Numbers concerning the blessings for the children of Israel. These were the favorite texts of Saint Frances of Assisi, to bless the people of his time; they are very appropriate and necessary blessings for all the immigrants from the 16th century until our days. We have all come to this blessed land with promises of liberty, justice, and happiness for all!

And to remind us that the fundament of peace and justice and happiness is God and His Son, Jesus Christ, the Church has asked us to reflect on Psalm 85, which was a psalm written when the city of Israel returned from its Babylonian captivity and was to remind them of the city, that God is a God of peace, that He loves justice, and that He desires happiness for all of them that inhabit the earth.

The Gospel of Saint Matthew reminds us that part of the Sermon on the Mount, well known by all of us as the Beatitudes, is the pith of the evangelical preaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are the beatitudes, the happy, and the blessed ones of the Son of God?

They are not the proud, the powerful, the millionaires, the ones that seek power, the war, or the corporate profits. Generally they are the ones that the world calls privileged and happy, but these are not the ones that God calls as such!

We remember that the first colonizers of the thirteen English colonies were very religious people that came to this land looking for peace and liberty in order to live their Christian faith. The same can be said about the patriots of the American Revolution. Most of them were devout Anglicans that desired an equalitarian society for all, based on the Christian principles of justice, liberty, and peace.

But perhaps, the almost 300 million human beings that nowadays inhabit the United States of America, have forgotten those ideals. It is such a vex that now the ones that are descendants of the colonizers and patriots, only want to defend their possessions and privileges. Perhaps even the people that arrive each year, legal and illegally to these lands, come from poor countries with desires to work, to accumulate goods, and to accumulate wealth without the greater Christian ideals. They have to fight a lot and to try to survive in a modern world plagued of the antinomies of the ideals of 1776!

It is correct then, the proposition of the Church to remind us how to become happy. How have we conquered the happiness in this country of opportunities?

We are going to summarize the way of Jesus:

First: to have the spirit of the Poor: is to say without attaching our hearts to the fine materials things of the world. The most precious of all the materials are called food, dress, shelter, transportation, or other fine materials. The Father which are in Heaven has Providence. He cares for us, His children, which are greatly valued even more than the birds of the field or the fish of the sea. To live removed from money and from the fine material possessions, few or many, will make us free, truly free, even for the day that we can leave this transitory world and fly to the eternal King where only there will be love and happiness!

Second: To be hungry and thirst for justice. This refers to those that dedicated their lives to the fight for justice of society in human relations. And not only in our society but in the entire world, because our Father isn't only an American prayer, but one of all man and our Father is not a God of one group, He is the God and Father of all humanity. This is the vocation of America, to be an instrument of God the Father for all humanity.

Third: Work for peace so that we will be known as the children of God, because our God is a God of peace. His Son, the Verb of God which became man, Our Savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the waited for Messiah, was born in a manger for which the angels sang: Glory to God in the highest and Peace on Earth. He gave peace throughout all of his life, and asked that his apostles be messengers of peace. The peace not known at death, but the interior and exterior peace based on justice which is shared in the grand human fraternity.

Fourth: Compassion, especially with the abandoned and the despised. Only then will we reach mercy.

Fifth: Suffering and persecutions for the cause of the Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope that sometime, we take the privilege to suffer and to be persecuted for our faith. What a great privilege. We remember the plea of Christian martyrs through the times, the numerous legions of our brothers in our time period that died because they were loyal to the Gospel and to their postulates of faith, liberty, peace, and justice for all!

Blessed are you Heavenly Father, because you have revealed these things to the simple people and you have hidden them from the wise and powerful of this world!

Thank you Lord, for being able to live in this country which is based on the foundations of liberty, justice, and happiness for all!