

Rev. Toan Do
Zechariah 9: 9-10
Romans 8: 9, 11-13
Matthew 11: 25-30

**FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
EPIPHANY CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Louisville, KY, USA
July 5, 2026

This weekend, I am going to do something that I have never done before in my 23 years as a priest. I had two homilies prepared this weekend, and I was thinking about which one I was going to give. Yesterday, although I presided at 5:30 mass, Deacon Randy gave a very insightful homily. Also, the fireworks, as we all are aware, kept me up until 12:50 AM this morning. So, I decided I'm going to give the second homily, which is really not mine but from Pope Leo. In the first homily, I was going to use a blank sheet of paper to illustrate the point about Jesus talking to children when God revealed Himself to those who were simple-minded. I wanted to use the blank sheet of paper as a demonstration, but that was at 12:50 AM with the fireworks ending.

This morning I decided to do the second homily. Pope Leo, who was honored with the Liberty Medal, delivered an address via live stream from the Vatican during the ceremony at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center on Friday, July 3rd, 2026.

This is an excerpt. On the eve of this momentous occasion, I offer a warm greeting to all those assembled at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. As a son of this great country, founded by courageous men and women who dreamed of liberty and of a better life for themselves and for their children, I join you in asking God's blessing upon America's future, that the lofty ideals enshrined at the beginning of the Declaration of Independence may continue to guide flourishing the nation in unity, justice, and peace. From our youth, most of us have admired the eloquence of these words with resounding appeal to the law of nature, and to nature's God as the basis of assertion that all men and women are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, including the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Well couched in the languages of the Enlightenment that claim it is ultimately grounded in an understanding of the human person, inspired by the great biblical vision of men and women being created in the divine image. It is indeed here that we discover the basis of human dignity, dignity that preceded the establishment of any state and whose custody constitutes its very purpose. In these past 250 years,

for so many people throughout the world, it was the firm resolve to achieve the noble vision of the nation's founders that made America a byword for freedom, as the country opened its doors to successive waves of immigrants, enabling them and their children to play their part in shaping the future of the nation. It was the same love of freedom that inspired the United States in the darkest hours of the last century, at the time of the two world wars, to look beyond itself and, at great sacrifice, to champion the cause of freedom beyond its own borders.

Every American knows, however, that the path to building a society that would embody these high ideals of liberty and justice for all was not always easy and in many respects is still a work in progress. Indeed, the effort to realize this vision is one that must be taken anew in each generation, and in the face of every new challenge. Today, as we look to the future, this historic anniversary presents us with the opportunity to reflect once again on the nation's founding principles and the hope that America will remain ever true to the dream that earned the title of land of the free and home of the brave. First, right enshrined by the nation's founders was the right to life, for no one who is deprived of life can enjoy liberty or pursue happiness. A country's vitality is deeply tied to the value it affords for human life in every form and condition. Acknowledging the dignity endowed upon every human person by virtue of their very existence. The inherent worth of every human life has led the noble hearts of generations to praise the marvelous works of the creator and stand in reverence before so precious a gift. Indeed, it is precisely this reverence that we must continue to cultivate, one that sways the hearts of individuals and inspires laws that recognize and safeguard the gift from the moment of conception to natural death. Reverence, too, will aid us in discovering that we are guardians and stewards of those entrusted to our care. In this regard, the moral greatness of a nation is manifested above all in its capacity to support, protect, and cherish the lives of all, especially the most vulnerable, and those whose worth is questioned. Following the right to life, liberty was and is preeminent among the principles revered by the men and women who have sought within this nation's borders a new beginning, often equating it with precisely undreamed-of hope, though frequently understood as the ability to act as one would like; authentic freedom runs much deeper. It is founded upon a human person's capacity to know the truth and adhere to what is good. Even at great cost, sacrifice is well known to many who have labored to shape this country. The desire for truth and freedom, as well as the very pursuit of happiness, continue to inspire people of all generations to ask fundamental questions regarding the meaning of life, our ultimate purpose, and indeed about God. It is proper for magnanimous hearts to endeavor to answer these questions with sincerity. These answers inevitably determine the direction that we seek to give to our lives. America has long championed the religious freedom necessary to follow the dictates of

conscience responsibly. In this regard, free from fear and coercion, as enshrined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It is this freedom that holds sacred the inner sphere of the person, where convictions are formed, and conscience can guide decisions made in the intimacy of the human heart. This same freedom also enshrines the right of every person to worship according to one's own beliefs, and the right of individuals, communities, and associations to give public expression to their faith. In fact, religious freedom gave rise to the American tradition of allowing for interfaith dialogue and inter-religious cooperation in promoting the public good and enriching the debates on the great moral and ethical issues that have faced the nation and shaped the course of history. It is my hope, Pope Leo said, " that this tradition will continue to bear fruit in a public discourse marked by moderation, respect for the views of others, and an ongoing effort to find common ground in promoting the cause of peace and reconciliation at home and abroad".

The forebears of this country, men and women of diverse backgrounds, religious and linguistic backgrounds, were able to find that common ground and the strength necessary to pursue a better future. The principles that inspired America's founders, rooted as they are in the truth of the human person, brought them together in a single cause, a common dream. Unity lent strength to that dream, giving rise under God to the United States of America (a pluribus unum - out of many one). In order for a nation to flourish, it must be truly united. United, not by goals bound to momentary endeavors, but by ideals that do not fade with the passing of time. May the principles we have reflected upon today, a shared human dignity, equality, and the rights laid out in the Declaration of Independence, ever be a source of such unity and a guiding light for the present moment, and for the years to come.

I, therefore, Pope Leo said, "pray that this, the 250th anniversary of the founding of this great nation, may be the occasion of a solemn recommitment to these ideals that have made America a country that values peace and prosperity, a country characterized by generosity and nobility of heart". "I commend all of you", Pope Leo said, "as well as the future of the nation, to the One who is Himself the source of true freedom and lasting peace, the One whose very name is peace. May God bless America". Delivered by Pope Leo at the Vatican on the eve of the 4th of July 2026, the occasion of his being honored during the Liberty Medal Ceremony at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center.