

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

July 4, 2021



“Every generation of Americans needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.” (Saint John Paul II) As our nation celebrates Independence Day this Sunday, July 4th, these words of Pope John Paul II delivered during a homily at Camden Yards in Baltimore in 1995 are worth taking some time to reflect upon. It is true that we have much to be grateful for as citizens & residents of the United States of America. For centuries, our land has enjoyed many blessings given to us by the hands of Almighty God. Some of these blessings are enshrined in the words of our Constitution “...*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.*” The many blessings that we enjoy as a nation from God often remind me of the words found in the book of Deuteronomy describing the nation of Israel... “For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7) This Independence Day, as we take time with family & friends to acknowledge & give thanks to God for the blessing of our freedom, we are also aware of the responsibility that it imposes upon us. As John Paul II reminded us when he visited the USA, the liberty that we enjoy as individuals and as a nation summons us to do what we ought, not simply to do what we like. ‘What is it we ought to do?’ is certainly an important question with many possible answers. As people of faith, we can start with the



Greatest Commandment. That is, we *ought to love God & love our neighbor as Jesus taught us.* With all of the division and animosity that has built up in our country over the past years, recalling this *Greatest Commandment* brings us right back to the basic premise of our country’s founding... “*that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.*” As Christians, we

can be a great witness to others of the love that the *Greatest Commandment* summons us to embrace and live by. So, with faith & confidence, may we continue to call upon the Lord, our God, who is close to us and who is always willing to bless our land *from sea to shining sea.*

Peace & Blessings,
Father John Large