

Fr. JC's Pastoral Letter

My dear Little Flower,

A week has passed since our nation celebrated 250 years of independence. The fireworks have faded, the celebrations have quieted, and now the Church invites us to ask a deeper question: What kind of fruit will our freedom bear? This Sunday's readings give us the image we need. Isaiah tells us that God's word is like rain and snow falling from heaven, watering the earth, making it fertile and fruitful. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of the sower who scatters seed. Some seed is lost, some struggles, but some falls on rich soil and produces fruit beyond imagining.

So, it has been with the Catholic faith in America.

As the blood of the martyrs became the seed of Christianity, the freedom afforded by this nation became, in God's providence, the fertile soil in which Catholicism could take root, breathe, grow, and flourish. Freedom did not create the Gospel. Christ did. Freedom did not found the Church. The Holy Spirit did. But freedom gave the Church room to build, teach, heal, serve, preach, and sanctify.

And from that soil, God raised up remarkable witnesses.

Archbishop John Carroll laid the foundations of the Church in a new republic. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. John Neumann built schools that formed generations of disciples. Venerable Fulton J. Sheen recognized that the new media of his day, radio and television, could become pulpits from which the Gospel entered millions of American homes. Dorothy Day revealed the face of Christ in the poor and taught that holiness is made visible in works of mercy. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini welcomed immigrants with the heart of a mother, building schools, hospitals, and orphanages wherever hope was needed. Blessed Michael McGivney - a simple parish priest like myself - strengthened families by founding the Knights of Columbus, forming generations of Catholic husbands, fathers, and servant leaders committed to charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism. Thomas Merton reminded an increasingly noisy world that silence is where we hear the voice of God and discover our true selves. Servant of God Isaac Hecker dreamed of a Church that would joyfully evangelize American culture. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin challenged our nation to defend the dignity of every human life from conception until natural death.

Standing beside them are other remarkable witnesses: St. Katharine Drexel, who gave away her fortune so that the forgotten might know their God-given dignity; St. Junípero Serra, who, although not native-born, much like myself, came as a missionary to proclaim Christ on this continent, reminding us that immigrants have long enriched both our nation and our Church; John Courtney Murray, whose work helped shape the Church's teaching on religious freedom; Bishop John England, Cardinal Francis George, Sister Thea Bowman, and, in our own time, Bishop Robert Barron, each witnessing to Christ in ways that continue to inspire the Church.



**ENGAGE
ENCOUNTER
EXPERIENCE**

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Fr. JC's Pastoral Letter Continued

St. Paul tells us that creation is groaning, waiting for redemption. Our nation, too, groans with wounds, divisions, fears, and hopes. But the Christian never gives in to despair. We believe that God's Word still falls like rain. We believe that Christ still sows with generosity. We believe that even now, the Holy Spirit is preparing new soil in the human heart.

The question is whether we will become that rich soil.

Freedom is not merely the right to choose. Freedom is the grace to choose the good. Freedom becomes holy when it makes room for truth, mercy, sacrifice, service, and love. The saints and witnesses of American Catholicism remind us that the greatest fruit of freedom is not comfort, success, or power. The greatest fruit of freedom is holiness.

A week after the celebration, the Lord asks us not simply to remember America with gratitude, but to renew America with faith. May God's Word take root in us. May our parish become rich soil. May our homes become places where faith grows. And may our country, in its next 250 years, be blessed not only with liberty, but with saints.

Your parish priest,
Fr. JC

WITNESSES OF FAITH, HOPE, & LOVE.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES. A LEGACY THAT INSPIRES.



ARCHBISHOP JOHN CARROLL
laid the foundations of the Church in a new republic.



ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON & ST. JOHN NEUMANN
built schools that formed generations of disciples.



VENERABLE FULTON J. SHEEN
recognized that the new media of his day, radio and television, could become pulpits from which the Gospel entered millions of American homes.



DOROTHY DAY
revealed the face of Christ in the poor and taught that holiness is made visible in works of mercy.



ST. FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI
welcomed immigrants with the heart of a mother, building schools, hospitals, and orphanages across America and beyond, wherever hope was needed.



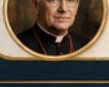
BLESSED MICHAEL MCGIVNEY
a parish priest, strengthened families by founding the Knights of Columbus, forming generations of Catholic husbands, fathers, and servant leaders committed to charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.



THOMAS MERTON
reminded an increasingly noisy world - in the middle of Manhattan - that silence is where we hear the voice of God and discover our true selves.



SERVANT OF GOD ISAAC HECKER
dreamed of a Church that would joyfully evangelize American culture.



CARDINAL JOSEPH BERNARDIN
challenged our nation to defend the dignity of every human life by fostering unity, interfaith dialogue, and developing the "consistent ethic of life."

STANDING BESIDE THEM: OTHER REMARKABLE WITNESSES



ST. KATHARINE DREXEL
who gave away her fortune so that the forgotten might know their God-given dignity.



ST. JUNÍPERO SERRA
who, although not native-born, much like myself, came as a missionary to proclaim Christ on this continent, reminding us that immigrants have long enriched both our nation and our Church.



JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY
whose work helped shape the Church's teaching on religious freedom.



BISHOP JOHN ENGLAND
a faithful shepherd who served with humility and dedication.



CARDINAL FRANCIS GEORGE
a wise and joyful witness to the Gospel in our time.



SISTER THEA BOWMAN
a joyful evangelizer whose voice and witness continue to inspire.



BISHOP ROBERT BARRON
who uses today's media to proclaim the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith.

MAY WE BE INSPIRED BY THEIR WITNESS
TO LIVE OUR FAITH BOLDLY,
LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR GENEROUSLY,
AND BUILD A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE.

The same Spirit. The same Mission. The same Gospel. Today.

Page 2