

Independence Day Year C

Throughout the history of Ancient Israel, God's greatest gift to this particular and peculiar people has been the land...the promise to Abraham and Moses that the people under their care would be a great nation...in their own homeland...in a land of promise in which they could be free...indeed the historical narrative of the people Israel in Hebrew scripture is a continuous story-line of moving from slavery to freedom...back into slavery and then to freedom again...One might well argue that the entire narrative sweep of scripture both Hebrew and New Testament are testimonies to God's priority for us...and that priority is freedom...because in freedom there is empowerment and agency, the ability to make a difference...and that is to live in dignity, the high water mark of salvation...and the stage on which such a drama unfolds is the land...Mt. Carmel, to Beersheba...to the majestic Herman...at Sinai...down below sea level in Jericho...the lake in the north in Galilee...the heights and busy streets of Jerusalem... a people called for freedom in the land, not apart from it, close to our mother who sustains us...and in our land...Boston Harbor...Philadelphia...Lexington and Concord... Gettysburg... Selma, Birmingham...the row crop fields of California...Detroit...Freedom the clarion call of the Gospels...and the basic tenet of our own Constitution, that we, brothers and sisters, are called to and for freedom...so to say that what we say and do as people of faith is rightly disconnected from the ways of our land and national affairs is quite absurd...because what we say and do through the enlightened imagination will change things...we live in a land that values the Gospel imperative of freedom...and that dear people of God is something to celebrate and that is something to act upon...

Are we effecting this democracy perfectly? Of course not...but our labors of love always give it a chance...Our Eucharist today is in honor of this land...in honor of this nation in which we live and move...this land and nation that we love...because in it we are free...most of us.

And let me hasten to say that this freedom and this love of our land comes with profound responsibility...Ancient Israel was obligated to take in the orphan and widow...they were to provide for the sojourner and the stranger...they were to take care of their poor...as the land lay fallow every seven years for its rejuvenation...debts were forgiven as well, for the rejuvenation of the people...and to love neighbor...the way of living close to the land is in short the way of taking care of each other...recognizing that the land takes care of us...the weak and the strong...So as a relatively newborn nation committed to freedom, we are born with great responsibility...As a nation born with great resources we must be about the abundant sharing of those resources...as a nation that has held up justice as a cardinal virtue...then we must see that such justice is enacted...because in truth there is no freedom without justice...and no one is truly free until all are free.

Israel had her prophets...the chosen ones for the good of their people who praised the good and called out the bad...let us as the church be those prophets...for to truly love this land we must demand its continuing perfection...perfection a process of moving towards the greater good despite the rampant evil in the world...despite the evil in our own land...to love rightly we must be about building Jerusalem, that wonderful metaphor for God's commonweal...building Jerusalem, the consummation of heaven and earth... God's dream for our world...building Jerusalem in this vast and beautiful place called

America...but more...more than that we are to build Jerusalem, God's gracious commonweal, now in solidarity with our world neighbors...we must master the art of befriending in a world grown very small...the borders, the intricately surveyed boundaries wrought by violence never really were...let us use our gift of this land, this land of promise to build Jerusalem in all her splendid freedom...to build Jerusalem as enlightened collaborators, trusted friends ...let us build Jerusalem on planet earth so that all are free to live as God would have it.