

From Pontiff to Pew (continued):

tradition; with openness to legitimate progress (cf. SC, 23).

The beginning of Chapter II of the Constitution on the Liturgy is woven with references to the great river of Tradition, that continues from the Fathers of the Church down to us. I will quote from it: "At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us." (SC, 47).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us draw with faith from this source of divine life and allow ourselves to be transformed by the mystery we celebrate.

From the Pastor's Desk:

Dear friends of Visitation Parish, as always, I hope and pray for the very best for you this coming week. As you know, this coming weekend marks the celebration of July 4th, and it is to be a celebration of Independence Day unlike any other that we have seen before seeing that it will mark the 250th anniversary of the formal adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. As we are all aware, it marks the historic day that the thirteen American colonies declared their separation from Great Britain to form a new, independent nation, asserting the right to self-governance, freedom, and fundamental human rights. It is a day that we should give thanks, for in our republic, we enjoy many freedoms that the rest of the world fails to realize. While 250 years is relatively young, we have proven that the American experiment was well worth the risk, and many over the course of history have defended this independence, these freedoms, and the right that we espouse as fundamental to every human person.

On that day, we will do much to celebrate. There will be spectacular displays of fireworks in many cities and towns nationwide, symbolizing our national pride. There will be parades hosting marching bands, military groups, and many decorated floats. Families and communities will gather to celebrate outdoor cookouts featuring many traditional American foods such as hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecue items, and fresh salads. And of course, the country will be widely decorated in the patriotic colors of red, white, and blue.

As we approach this most sacred national holiday, of which we should always be very proud, I am asking all parishioners to mark the coming holiday with one additional activity...PRAYER. We must pray for our country. Not that our country is not always in need of prayer, for any house must always be built upon the rock of prayer to survive; however, if we are all honest, we have to realize that our country is at a crossroads. **We are a house divided**...and if the truth be told, as we read in the scriptures, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand."* (cf. Matthew 12:25). And this is not merely my opinion. An April 2026 Pew Research Center study shows that roughly seven-in-ten Americans are dissatisfied with the way their democracy is working. Their data was largely gained from three independent sources known well to political scientists: The **V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index** (which is independent rather than liberal in the traditional sense), **The Freedom House** which publishes the yearly **Freedom in the World Report** (which rates countries on political rights and civil liberties and is based on the views of local experts), and **The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)** which publishes the annual **Democracy Index** (which rates countries on electoral processes, governance, civil liberties, political participation and political culture). All three reports indicate that U.S. democracy ratings trail those of other G7 nations. In the Pew Survey of this year, it is interesting to note that 68% of Americans – including majorities in both parties – say democracy in the United States used to be a good example for other countries to follow but has not been in recent years. Far fewer (24%) say U.S. democracy is a good example for other countries to follow. Another 7% say the U.S. has never been a good example (which I admit is a bit of an extreme perspective).

While a very different scenario exists today, in a sense one is reminded of some of our darkest days that occurred during the Civil War. Then the issues were primarily three: slavery, states rights vs. federal power, and economic differences. It did bring about a new and more powerful nation with the start of industrialization, big business, and strong central government. We can NEVER forget; however, that the Civil War was also the costliest war in American history, with more than 620,000 fatalities (two percent of the population!) – more than any war before or since. Today there are a plethora of divisions: there is the Two-Party Divide where the U.S. remains a two-party system dominated by Democrats and Republicans, but their positions have become increasingly opposed on most policy fronts; Ideological Polarization (based upon misperceptions of the other party, media influence {partisan media and social media echo chambers reinforce ideological silos}, and many economic and social frustrations), division over social and cultural issues (including, but not limited to abortion, gun control, climate change, and racial and gender issues), economic and policy

disagreements (including but not limited to minimum wage and labor rights, federal vs. state power, and economic conditions); war and peace, freedoms of speech, assembly, the press...and unfortunately the list could go on and on.

The reality of the matter is that as complex as these divisions are there is a solution that could at the very least bridge the gap on many of these issues: BETTER OPEN, HONEST COMMUNICATION. One need only review the various news media (internet, television, or print) to see that leaders fail to truly talk with one another and understand the premise behind the arguments presented on both sides. Logic suggests that open an honest dialogue about the many aforementioned issues could level the political intelligence of current debates and result in greater unity in our nation. I may be naïve; however, I do believe that *most* politicians in their hearts desire what is good for our nation. Most do not want the American experiment to fail after so many years. And while power does have the potential to corrupt, if we demand that our leaders actually talk with one another, we can once again become the great nation that we have the essential DNA to be. God bless America, the land that we love.

Let's not miss this great opportunity this week. Pray for the unity of our nation. I am suggesting the following prayer; however, you are obviously able to pray as your heart moves you to do.

Heavenly Father, unite the hearts of Americans across every state and community, replacing division with love, respect, and shared purpose. We come before You as a nation founded on Your Word, seeking Your guidance to heal divisions and restore harmony. Remove bitterness, hatred, and political hostility that divide citizens, and replace them with understanding, compassion, and cooperation.

Lord, in the unity of the Spirit, bind up the enemy's attempts to split us along lines of race, gender, class, or politics. Help us see each other as You do – valuing every person as a unique creation of Yours, united in faith and purpose. We pray for reconciliation among states, fostering mutual respect and collaborative governance. Let leaders and citizens alike prioritize the common good over partisan interests, guided by wisdom and love. May Your peace reign in every heart, city, and state, reflecting Your divine unity. Let us be a shining example of love, grace, and justice for the world to see.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

There is one other thing that I feel the need to mention this week, seeing that it is extremely important for the good of our parish. This week a note was forwarded to me in response to the invitations that were sent out to the membership of our parish *by the*

parish (which decided to hold this celebration for me). It was a rather nasty note and to summarize it castigated the parish (represented by me) for not reaching out to their family in the midst of a family tragedy years ago. The simple facts were that **I was never informed** by this family of the horrible incident to which they referred in their curt missive. Since I knew nothing about it, and to be direct, I do not have the capacity to read minds, I could not reach out to them. I discovered because of this second unfortunate reality, both I and the parish have been maligned in public circles which leaves a very bad taste in my mouth. I have committed this family to prayer for to publicly present false information about another so as to potentially ruin their reputation is sinful, and mortally sinful at that. Hopefully, the corrective that I attempted to make by way of a letter in response put an end to this untoward situation. Regardless of how they feel toward me, I pray that their anger may be abated and they may achieve some peace.

The greater reason for my bringing attention to this matter is to remind all parishioners that I cannot reach out to minister to you if I am unaware of a situation that needs my pastoral care. I can assure you that I have gone to great lengths to be available to all of you over the past 12 years and will continue to do so as long as I serve as your pastor. Therefore, in any event you are in need of my assistance, please reach out to me. If you leave a message with the office and do not hear back from me, be certain to leave a message in my private mailbox. I will reach out to you. I do not want anyone to feel alone, abandoned, or without recourse in time of trouble. As I have always said, I LOVE YOU AS MY VERY OWN FAMILY and I will always do what I can to assist you. God bless and be well.

School Cleaning - In order to maintain our school building while not in use, it needs to be periodically cleaned. The building has not been officially “spring cleaned” since the departure of the Learning Lamp. Looking forward to future showings of the building for possible rental of the space, we are in need of people to come forward to help thoroughly clean the building at this time since we are currently without a full-time maintenance person (Chris continues to recover from her car accident). You can either call Gaile Krumenacker @ 243-7899 or sign the sign-up sheet in the back of the Church to arrange the details and to volunteer for this very important work. Thank you for taking time to help support our parish.