

One Nation Under God

Reflecting on the Spirit's Call

Theme *We speak the words; do we live in a nation "Under God"?*

Setting *A table with a display of a symbol of the United States, a candle, and a sacred religious symbol. Chairs arranged suitable for conversational sharing.*

Opening

Song Verse of "America the Beautiful"

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
May God shed grace on thee.
And make of us one family,
From sea to shining sea.

Proclamation I pledge allegiance to one nation,
under God.

Reading

Preparing for Independence Day -- a Reflection

by Mark Franceschini, OSM

Our nation is at a crossroad.

The clutter and complexity of our current government is obvious: today's atmosphere, actions, and policies are the result of many factors that affect us and are the effect of past deeds and decisions. Religious beliefs are usually a balm generating calm. Today they add to the combustion growing in the bedrock polarization that cripples us all. We need



an understanding and conviction to get beyond the present paralysis. Healthy dialogue, frank discussions, cooperation, and consensus can stop our self-destructing. This is my view, not God's truth or U.S. principles as stated in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, or Bill of Rights. Those hard earned and worthwhile values are the glory of our nation.

Today I sense too many rest on these laurels of our heritage, but aren't eager or committed to participating in their healthy practice. Winning, being right, holds sway. This becomes bedrock truth when the letter of the law and moral principles are absolutes broaching no opposition and eliminating every kind of wrong....

It is blind to the real issues that need resolving and to the compassion and justice that Jesus ever exemplified.

I invite you to reflect on what is happening in our nation and what any or all of us can do about it. No one can undo any of it. That's the heartache of living sincerely and caring for others. As painful and distressing as doing so is, it is our salvation as true peoples of the United States and as daughters and sons of God.

**Living sincerely
and caring
for others
is our
salvation
as daughters and
sons of God.**

Prayer to the Spirit

Reader Life Giving Spirit, we come to listen to your call as a people living in a land that proclaims itself a nation under God.

*All Spirit of Life and wisdom, open our hearts
and minds to your truth.*

Reader We hear, “our nation is at a crossroad.” What is our call to lead and guide?

*All Spirit of Life and wisdom, open our hearts
and minds to your truth.*

Reader We have sung, “make of us one family.” Where is the healing needed in this family of our nation?

*All Spirit of Life and wisdom, open our hearts
and minds to your truth.*

Reader We hear a call to be committed to participating in the healthy practice of the values of our nation. We often lack the courage and conviction needed to live this way.

*All Spirit of Life and wisdom, open our hearts
and minds to your truth.*



Reader We take time now to reflect together on our call to live sincerely and care for others.

*All Spirit of Life and wisdom, open our hearts
and minds to your truth.*

Sharing

Leader We pause now to reflect on what we have heard and to speak to God the prayer within our own heart.

(Allow time for quiet reflection and prayer.)

Leader You are now invited to turn to the person next to you and share one word or phrase in the song or reading that is most meaningful to you.

(After sharing time.)

Song Verse of “America the Beautiful”

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thorough-fare for
freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine ev’ry flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law.



Readings

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of God which I enjoin on you today, loving God, and walking in God’s ways, and keeping God’s commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and God will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy.

If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land which you are crossing Jordan to enter and occupy....

I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving God, your God, heeding God’s voice and holding fast to God.

Reflection

- ◆ What “flaws” in our nation do you ask God to mend?
- ◆ Where have the people of this nation chosen death?
- ◆ In what ways have the people of this nation chosen life?

Leader You are invited to speak words of death (*flaws to be mended*) and words of life that you experience in our nation today.

(Time for sharing.)

Reader From [Mark Franceschini, OSM](#)

God once called the people to “Choose Life” not death. Did God mean choose to be for others as well as yourself? The seeds of death were planted in self-seeking and an absurd love of self which blinds one to participating in the giving, receiving, sharing and enjoyment of life which comes from relationships of love and justice, compassion and forgiveness. Is this fantasy?

I believe God expects an answer which becomes a way of life.

Closing

(Pray together) O God of life, you call us to be life-givers as you have given us life in your compassion and love. Help us to be for others in relationships of love, justice, compassion and forgiveness as we choose your way to become a way of life for us. Grant that we may be people committed to mend the

flaws of our nation in ways that lead us to be truly “a nation under God” choosing life for ourselves and for all peoples of all nations. We pray with trust in the gifts of your Spirit. Amen.

Song Verse of “America the Beautiful”

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
Your people look to you
For justice, peace and dignity,
For freedom giv’n anew.

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
undimm’d by human tears!
America! America!
May God shed grace on thee
And make of us one family,
From sea to shining sea.

*(Text: Katharine Lee Bates; adapted 1985.
Tune: Samuel A. Ward)*



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