



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend, these words echo in our collective ears as American citizens:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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.

These words from the Declaration of Independence hold a special place in our hearts, reminding us of the call to stand up against tyranny, so that we may have freedom.

At the heart of this Declaration is the belief that our rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are not given to us by the government, nor by the common assent of the people, but directly from our God, our Creator. In our culture today, we have widely forgotten this truth – the truth that there are some things that are right (and worth fighting for) no matter if the government or the majority of the population say they are wrong. And that some things are wrong and worth fighting against, no matter if the government the majority of the population say they are right. Why? Because God created the world and the human being with a certain order and nature. Therefore, there are certain rights (and responsibilities) that are inherent to us – that are part of who we are as children of God – not given to us by the government nor a vote of the majority.

The problem that we now have is that we each see the pursuit of happiness as something different – and they can conflict with each other. My right to pursue happiness may be hindered by what you are doing to pursue happiness. Even though, we were endowed with equality of dignity as children of God, our nature is fallen (thank you Adam and Eve!). With this, we often don’t know how to pursue happiness. One may seek happiness by amassing great amounts of wealth, while others (like St. Francis of Assisi) may seek it by giving everything away and living in purposeful poverty. Some may seek happiness by trying to fill every desire for pleasure, while others (like St. Paul of the Cross) may seek it by denying themselves and having self-mastery over their passions.

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.
(Matthew 11:27)

True happiness is found in knowing the only One who can fulfill that happiness. True happiness can only be found in the One who is beauty and joy and life and freedom Himself – Almighty God. It is He who has endowed us with the desire for life, liberty and happiness, and He who is the only One who can fulfill that desire. To come to know the Father, Jesus says that He (the Son) must reveal Him (the Father). How does Jesus reveal the Father to us – in the Scriptures, in His words, in His very being, in His Presence in the Eucharist (after all, He said to see Him is to see the Father [see John 14:9]).

This weekend, as we ponder our unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, may we truly seek to pursue *true happiness*. May we pursue the only One who can give us happiness: our God and Father who loves us so intimately and tenderly and passionately; our Lord Jesus Christ who reveals the face of the Father to us; the Holy Spirit who, by entering into us, allows us to enter into the very source of all happiness.