

THE CATHOLIC HOUR

AMERICA'S IDEAL: NOT WAR BUT PEACE

BY

REV. MSGR. T. JAMES McNAMARA

Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of
Savannah-Atlanta

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Fellow Americans:

The pattern for world peace and peace within the nation was formulated on July 4, 1776. In their Declaration of Independence on that epoch-making day, the Founding Fathers, as the legally-constituted representatives of a nation conceived in suffering and born of conscience, laid the groundwork on which alone can be built a just and durable peace. In the principles they enunciated is found the only secure prop for peace among nations and within nations. In committing themselves and future generations of Americans to an acknowledgment of God as the Author of life, liberty and human happiness, they put beyond the jarring self-interest of men the welfare of the nation and of individuals within the nation. In so committing themselves and future generations of Americans, they established the United States of America as a nation of believers. In the virtue of Faith, they saw the way to rise above the clashing inequalities of life and to save men from the arbitrary enactments of their fellows.

Amid the trials and tribulations, the disappointments and the sorrows of a subject people, the Founders of this nation were

enabled to see with that clarity which Faith alone, stimulated by suffering, could engender. They turned to nature and to nature's God and found the principles for a just and durable peace. The Faith that was theirs, we of this generation must re-kindle if we are to retain our precious heritage of freedom. The Faith that was theirs, we must live if our nation is to fulfill its high destiny to a stricken world.

Strange as it may seem, with educational opportunities within the reach of all, we, as a people, lack the science of Faith. Knowledge we have, but unfortunately for us and for the world that looks to us today for leadership, it is only a knowledge of the fruits of Faith but not of Faith itself. We have all the self-assurance which possession inspires, but we are at a loss to explain the origin of our possession. We revel in the fruits; we are puzzled and confused when others whom we would help do not find these fruits as convincing as we who have enjoyed their sweet beneficence uncontestedly.

Nature has been most bountiful and extremely prodigal in our regard; we have used this bounty and prodigality to build a nation which is the envy of all

nations. In the spirit of our traditions, we have offered to share the good things which nature has so generously provided for us. We are annoyed and angered when those less favored than ourselves, receiving of our bounty, refuse to accept as well our concept of fundamentals in government. Perplexed and disillusioned, many amongst us would have the nation withdraw into isolation and leave the world to suffer the canker of its own wounds.

Little do such people realize that it is not the gifts that are questioned, but rather the motive which prompts the gifts. Nations are not ungrateful; they are suspicious, fearful of what we expect in return. They cannot understand why we would share, since, to them, we are interested chiefly in our strength. Like individuals, nations resent paternalism; we, as a people, are as yet to declare that is not paternalism but the Paternity of God that prompts our sharing.

Emotionally we are moved by this sublime truth of the Fatherhood of God; rationally we lack its conviction which could convince others of the sincerity of our motives. We give of our sustenance to sustain abroad the meaning of our Bill of Rights; we lack the courage to tell abroad the religious background of our

country's Declaration of Independence, which alone makes meaningful the liberties and freedoms of that Bill of Rights.

Certainly we do not lack the courage because the majority of the American people have repudiated that religious background. Indeed, it is a valid assumption that the majority still cling to these major premises of our country's proud boast of liberty and freedom since no successful effort has been made "to alter or abolish" them.

We might ask ourselves in the light of this supported assumption, why, then, does the Educational System of America in its totality fight shy of integrating this religious background into school curricula generally? Why, then, does our country in its boast of liberty and freedom continue to state itself abortively, stressing the fruits of belief in God, and yet refusing to acknowledge fully God, the Source of these fruits?

The Catholic School, part of the American Educational System, is happy that it serves the nation in these all-important matters of Faith; it would be happier if the nation would bring the full force of these vitalizing principles to bear on national thinking. No one has ever charged the Founding Fathers with sectarianism because of the

religious truths they incorporated into the Declaration of Independence; why then, should such a charge be feared in restating in textbooks, these religious truths and the reasons on which they rest?

More and more, events that are challenging our concepts of liberty and freedom are shaping themselves at home and abroad. More and more, these events are shaping our country's necessity to declare, as did the Founding Fathers, the origin of liberty and freedom, or suffer their loss. The challenge and consequent necessity surprisingly come, not so much from events abroad, as from events at home.

A changing economy has made many of our citizens rank pragmatists and earthly materialists. They regard class warfare as inevitable, and look upon the qualities of the Declaration as idle speculations having no bearing on the practicalities of life. Unfortunately, on the other hand, there are many more fortuitously placed in our country's economy, who give lip service to these equalities while using class consciousness to serve their equally pragmatic ends. Both blot out American and religious values, and make our country's boast of liberty and freedom a hollow sham. Both are prosaic, matter-of-fact, critical, indeed blase and

"knowing." Knowing in the sense of knowing-it-all, they find within themselves the explanation of all things. What excites and occupies their thoughts is not the background of their world, but the foreground, the world of phenomena, their own little selfish world, its facts and events. This is all they see and all they contemplate. Inquiry into the nature of these phenomena, into the ultimate cause of their effects, all seem to them misguided and sterile. They cannot carry beyond the physical world because their metaphysical capacity is stunted. Plato, the ancient philosopher, would say that they lacked an eye, the eye for the invisible.

In a similar manner, their sense of the supernatural and the divine is weakened. They have a secret antipathy towards anything claiming to be divine, unconditioned, absolute. The world of Faith makes no appeal whatever to them; indeed, they have an aversion to it, if they are not actually hostile. Consciously or unconsciously, they have turned from God, and to all intents and purposes have become atheistical. Deliberately and on principle limiting their thoughts and opinions to sensual experiences, in the words of Chesterton, "they have become most unnatural while seeking to be natural."

They take the smallest section of all reality to be the whole reality. They ignore or deny the ultimate roots of this reality, its profoundest relations, its connection with the invisible and the divine. Divorcing their thought from the totality of being, they have isolated themselves from the creative thought of God. They have artificially mapped out for themselves a particular field of reality and dare to call it nature.

Unlike the Founding Fathers of our country, they have divorced nature from nature's God; thus they have secularized their lives and seek the secularization of the nation's life. Their whole mentality warped, Faith for them and for those who fall under their influence is made incomparably difficult. Concentrating on the mere visible world, the world of phenomena, their capacity to see God has been weakened. Blinded by the things of time, they regard life as a struggle which will inevitably blot out dignity, liberty and freedom for those not disposed to battle.

They are the real threat to our country's determination to perpetuate liberty and freedom in the traditions of the nation's Declaration of Independence; they are the enemy threatening

to obscure our country's ideal of peace.

We, the believers of America —Protestant, Jew and Catholic —must re-assert our **Faith** in our nation's thinking. We must so order our thought and action that the world can identify our Faith in our nation's acts. We must so demonstrate religion in our living that the secularized citizens within our midst will, by sheer force of example, return to their true selves, to their true nature, to the child in them. How charged with fate are the words of Jesus today: ". . . Unless you . . . become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*Matthew* 18:3). Yes, others lacking belief must be persuaded by the sheer force of example to turn to God as did the Founding Fathers, the authors of true Americanism. They must be made to realize that this does not mean closing their eyes to the testimony of nature; but rather, means opening their eyes and their ears, their hearts and their minds to nature's God, in Whom alone nature and its works find meaning.

Either the American Protestant, the American Jew and the American Catholic will stand together in defense by word and example of those religious principles which give meaning to

traditional Americanism, or they will suffer the drastic consequences. These religious principles, so vital to the way of life of Protestantism, Judaism and Catholicism are identically and equally vital to the continuation of the American way of life. Eliminate them, and you may soon have the Omnipotent State and its arbitrary enactments, circumscribing and dissipating human dignity and human liberty. Eliminate them, and you may have persecution and eventual liquidation of the conscientious Protestant, Jew and Catholic. Eliminate these religious principles, and you may well have life with fear, liberty destroyed, and happiness deteriorated.

Eventually there is no alternative. Either men are creatures of God, or they become creatures of the State. Either men enjoy equally from the Omnipotent God rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or they become simply pawns to be used by an Omnipotent State for power. Either the State is their servant or the State becomes their master. Either they are free or they will be slaves. Either man seeks his own welfare and the welfare of others through cooperation and understanding, or he becomes a creature bent on survival at the expense of his fellows. Cooperation and under-

standing mean liberty and freedom; survival means force and subjugation. Liberty and freedom require God; force and subjugation require brute energy. God is peace; brute energy is war.

Long since our country placed itself on the side of God. In its birth certificate it is written, "When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people . . . to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them . . . We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." Too long since the nation has allowed the process which has progressively obscured this Declaration. Too often has the American Protestant, the American Jew, and the American Catholic allowed an extremely volatile compound of sneers, assumptions and disdainful phrases to shame them into silence.

New and unusual storms have gathered threateningly on the horizon of man's dignity and man's liberty. While we know that the conflict between God and evil, between God and His ene-

mies, will not end until the time when, to the field of mingled wheat and tares, the sickle and torch shall be applied; nevertheless, as keepers in the tower of Israel, we must be ever alert. The ocean of religious faith in God, has, like terrestrial seas, its rising and refulgent tides. For many years its waters have been steadily receding; and it looks as though the ebb has well nigh reached its limit. The tide is turning and the flood will once more break upon our shores. If we are to be spared crucifixion at the turning of this tide, then it behooves us to quicken the flood of Faith in the minds and the hearts of our own and of generations to come.

Today that civilization which brought forth its finest flowering in the fertile soil of the New World of Columbus' discovery, is threatened as never before in its long history of achievement and accomplishment for the benefit of mankind. It is said that the mouthpiece of the Archconspirator against progress made the boast that he and his hellish cohorts would slam the door of civilization so hard it would remain closed for generations. The Archconspirator was defeated. His fight on God continues. It is well, then, that we re-dedicate our selves to those eternal principles which have found their

noblest political expression in this, our land—to those eternal principles which divide the nations of the world into opposing camps, but which are the only promise of a just and durable peace.

When this New World, born of the "Santa Maria" and bearing first the name of Mary's Son, became known to the peoples of the Old World, they, in turn, looked to it as a refuge from tyrants and a haven for conscience. When those who came elected to establish a nation, they wrote their political expression in terms of the tradition that was signified by such holy and hallowed names as Santa Maria, San Salvador and La Navidad. They wrote in terms of the truths that are set down in the pages of history in the Sacred Blood that was shed on Calvary.

It would seem that our land is in a very literal sense, a child of Providence; and our history clearly demonstrates that the greatness of our nation has not been apart from God; on the contrary, it has been with God. In the Declaration of Independence, our land gave to the world one of the highest and most complete political expressions of the teaching of Him, Who alone rightfully bears the sacred title, Prince of Peace.

That we might not fail the world and the nation in this hour of crisis, let us re-dedicate ourselves in the spirit of our country's Founders to the eternal principles of peace: 1) That God in His wisdom, without distinction of race, color or creed, created all men equal; 2) that governments are established to protect men in the exercise of God-given rights, which in the aggregate add up to human happiness and prosperity; 3) that the only successful economy is that expressed tersely on the

coinage of our nation, trust and confidence in God; 4) that gratitude to God is a patriotic as well as a religious duty. So dedicating ourselves, our spirit will be the spirit of the great navigator, Columbus; the spirit of high romance and adventure; the spirit that leads men on, ever upward, ever onward. Then and only then can we, the people of the United States, say to the peoples of the world, as did Columbus to a mutinous crew, "Sail on; sail on!"