

FR. CAMURATI'S CORNER

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We celebrate July 4th tomorrow as Independence Day, but what meaning does that have for us today?

We gained independence from an English Monarch, but our media still writes avidly of the monarchy we shed...

We gained independence from European domination, but are still keenly interested in European affairs as a vital national interest...

My favorite answer, in the 1996 movie Independence Day, is that we've somehow gained independence from space aliens. A dumb movie, but still so much fun!

If we are to keep this observance fresh, and still liberating, we have to recognize the principles invoked that justified rebellion and the independence it secured. Namely, that men by nature bear rights that allow them to resist and reject arbitrary and capricious governance. Laws, in the classical phrasing, are ordinances of reason that should foster the common good.

Any society should be judged in just this way—how it contributes to the flourishing of its citizens. Frederick Douglass famously refused to celebrate July 4th, because its principles were not yet recognized as applying to him and other African Americans. Martin Luther King turned this on its head—the Declaration of Independence had not yet been applied fully towards fostering Black Americans as equal members of our society, but it had been a “promissory note”, a loan whose principal balance was due to be cashed—on principle.

This independence day, like any other, is an examination of conscience as a nation as to how we are doing in promoting authentic freedoms that lead to authentic freedom—a pursuit of happiness not simply in line with one's whims, but rather along the lines of virtue, prosperity, and peace. The first of those authentic freedoms is the right to life itself, which we are invited to continue working toward as we cash that promissory note for another class of Americans who have been disregarded under law, namely the unborn.

A blessed independence day. May we never declare independence from what makes us thrive (cf. John 10:10).

In Christ,

Fr. Leo, O.P