

## Sermon 07-04-10 “Interdependence Day”

Washington D.C. is a wonderful area to live in, especially on the Fourth of July! After the annual holiday concert on the Mall, broadcast nationwide, the fireworks begin and I can watch them and hear them from my balcony five minutes from the National Cathedral and visualize my being a part of what happens in our nation’s capital. But the Fourth of July is meant to be more than just flags, picnic fun, and fireworks.

Traditionally at Independence Day observances presidents, preachers, and pundits will call us back to honor and give thanks for the remarkable leadership of our Revolutionary forebearers who won our independence from England. And we can marvel over the fact that two of these leaders, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both died on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July exactly 50 years after they signed the Declaration of Independence. But unless we are stirred by the national hymns such as we will sing this morning, these traditional Independence Day observances will leave us nothing much to remember after the holiday.

So I think this is a time not just to go back in history, or to try to re-create history, but to go forward. This is a time to reflect on how the courage and sacrifice of our forefathers are maturing now into a new level of living. This is a time to take the next steps from dependence to independence and then to move onto and appreciate and be part of the increasingly global *interdependence* of the world we have inherited—a world of good interconnection that is described by words like mutuality, community, and synergy.

Nature is a great model of interdependence as the flowers give nectar to the bees, who in turn return the favor by pollinating the flowers. But interdependence is social as well. As technology thrives when Chinese students come here for their Ph.D's and return to China to help foster new research at home; as cheap oil and population growth bring us all to each other's doorsteps, and as the globalization of economic, political and ecological factors (and occasional disasters like the Gulf oil spill) have woven our destinies ever-more-tightly together, more people are waking up to the fact that we are interdependent whether we like it or not.

I remember hearing the Prime Minister of Canada speaking to that at a Rotary meeting in Buffalo saying to his listeners from across the water, "living next to you is like sleeping next to an elephant—one feels every twitch and grunt!"

Now there are people, maybe here today, who would respond by saying, "get as far away from the elephant as you can, or ignore it!" But most of us would appreciate being able to read in the Post this past Wednesday examples of interdependence good news-- that the United States will accept help to deal with the oil spill from 12 countries and international organizations. (One of those countries is Japan, who is sending two high-speed skimmers and a fire containment boom.)

Indeed, the Gulf oil spill shows that we are all connected and there is no escape; our common future depends on how we care for the rest of our natural world, not just the square feet

of soil we call “our own.” We all breathe the same air, our food comes from the same ground and seas, and the water we have to share cycles through the same air shed, watershed and terra firma.

But the still-unfolding disaster as oil tar balls show up farther east, is good evidence of the other side of the coin— of our nation’s addiction to oil, and of the greed that comes with uninhibited growth and consumerism. It is not just you and I who ultimately are the victims of course, but also the birds, plants and animals at the base of the vast food chain that winds slowly around Florida and threatens the east coast.

Hopefully in this global waste of earth and human resources we will not waste the opportunity to wake all of us to the need for “Earth Stewardship”, a cause we try to highlight through our Earth Stewardship Commission and in most issues of our bi-weekly “Pilgrim.”

We have an “interdependence” Collect this morning as we pray to God that we may “keep all the commandments loving God by loving our neighbor, and “be united one to another with pure affection.” Hopefully such a tragedy can help us take to heart St. Paul’s words that the blood of Christ was shed to break down the walls and hostilities that separate the peoples of the earth; to take to heart Jesus’ words of legacy from the Cross “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people to me.” To remember that it was Jesus himself who summarized all the commandments by connecting loving God, to loving our neighbor; and to reflect on the

interdependence St. Paul visualized when he wrote to the Galatians in our epistle today: “Bear one another’s burdens.”

“Bear one another’s burdens.” That message of interdependence weaves through the Bible, and through the great spiritual formation program for adults and children here at St. James’ beginning this fall, “Building Connections.”

So I suggest that as we exchange the “peace of the Lord” this morning, we make this Independence Day a time to declare our connection with one another through our interdependence. Today we can pledge to live this truth in our personal relationships, in our communities and societies, as we thrive together into a long future that we create--together.

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After his historic visit to the United States, just five years after Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died, the oft-cited author Alexis De Tocqueville summarized what he had learned about this country by writing “America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

On this Independence Day we need to pledge to take the next step of interdependence so that this message will stay with us in all that we do and say. Then this morning we will be praying as well as singing, “America, America, God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea!”