

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, Peace!

This weekend we are celebrating the one hundred thirty-second anniversary of the independence of the United States. We remember, of course, the work of the founders of our nation in Philadelphia on a hot summer's day in 1776. When I think of Independence Day, however, I sometimes believe that we ought to have a Dependence Day as well in the United States.

We are, of course, a highly independent, individualistic people. When it comes to our faith, however, I firmly believe that we ought to have a perpetual celebration of dependence, reminding us of how much we are dependent on God and on others as well. Sometimes, it seems to me, we carry our independence too far.

Settlers showed their independence when they moved to new parts of our land. Once they had arrived, however, they usually depended upon others for their safety and the organization of their livelihood. Americans were people who, it was said, "stuck together."

A new biography of George Washington, however, makes the point that he, like almost all the other Founding Fathers, was a deist. Deists had faith in God as a power but little acceptance of a relationship to God as a person. Deism has sometimes been called the "watchmaker heresy." God is like a watchmaker who is responsible for the watch's existence but not for how it is subsequently used. Perhaps that aspect of the founders' characters had something to do with their sense of independence.

The Lord calls us, I believe, through our nation to reach out to others. Although the United States is experiencing financial difficulty at this time in our history, we are still a highly prosperous people. Several weeks ago, when gasoline was less than \$3.90 per gallon in this area of the country, it was about eight dollars per gallon in Spain. In third-world nations, the suffering is terrible. Jesus reminds us that we are intimately connected to the sufferings of others.

We know that we are completely dependent on a loving God, who gave us his Son, for every breath that we take and every step that we make. As we celebrate Independence Day, therefore, let us remember our genuinely Christian dependence. Let us pray for the grace to know that we can never truly "make it" on our own.

May the Lord bless you and your family on this holiday weekend!

In our Lord,
Donald A. Hawkins, S.J.
Pastor