

ANNOUNCEMENTS: July 3, 1977

COMMUNION

It is the custom of this Church to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month. We like to announce - especially for the benefit of visitors in the congregation - that the Table of our Lord is open to all. One does not have to be a member of this parish, nor of this denomination to receive the Sacrament.

We would invite all of you to receive it this hour. It will be served to you at the altar rail. The ushers will indicate to you when to come forward. And we hope that the time for you may be an occasion of spiritual renewal...a moment of reaffirmation of your life to the life of God as it is revealed to us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

GREETING

We take this moment also to greet the visitors in the congregation. We are delighted to have you with us....and we hope that the opportunity will be ours to greet you in a more personal way - either at the door or downstairs in the CR where punch and cookies will be served.

Be free in the sharing of your name; sign one of our Guest Books. Join us on other Sundays in worship and in fellowship in a church that has been ministering to the needs of people in this part of NYC since 1837.

CONCERNS

Memorial Day weekend. July 4th weekend. Labor Day weekend... these are the three "low" Sundays in this church, as so many of our members and friends take to the mountains or the beaches...or wherever. I'm pleased so many of you are here, and grateful for your presence. Over the years I have discovered that human need takes no holiday and that on Sundays like this the needs of people for worship, for guidance, for support, for fellowship are even greater.

You would want to know that Ruth Frame is back with us today following several weeks of illness. Bob Smith had surgery this week and is convalescing at home in NJ. Our secretary is still "out" and will not be back again this week. During her illness, we are fortunate to have Mrs. Stephen Cohen, a friend of the church, helping us out.

Remember that we have a mid-week service - Wednesdays at 6:30 in the third floor Fellowship Hall - for those away from the city on weekends. It's proving to be popular, meeting a need with attendance running between 15 and 20.

OFFERING

Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive". In this spirit, let us worship God with our morning offering.

"DECLARE YOUR INTERDEPENDENCE"

INTRODUCTION

Today is the day before our Independence Day - a pivotal holiday of the American people, given to patriotic speeches, fireworks and family outings. Cars by the millions will jam the highways this weekend taking droves of us to parks and beaches. For many, it is a welcome mid-Summer break from work.

However, what philosophical or spiritual meaning should it hold for us. We know it's a celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776. We mark it as a day on the calendar to pay tribute to freedom and independence, to think and speak and come and go and worship God as we choose. In a political sense we realize that the original Declaration is still something to work for, something that hasn't happened yet, that with all we have achieved in the past 201 years there is still some growing to be done.

DEVELOPMENT

For one thing, we need to remember that the Declaration of Independence was not the act of an individual; rather, it was a cooperative effort of some visionary, brave men. They well knew that if their cause failed they would be convicted of treason and put to death. Remember Benjam Franklin's sober, cautious words, "We must all hang together, or we will all hang separately".

Although we celebrate our political independence this weekend, we must continue to realize that we are just as interdependent today as were those bold patriots of 1776. Nobody is truly independent today; nobody can really get along entirely by himself. On the contrary, we depend upon one another in these modern times more than human beings ever have in the past.

COOPERATION

Cooperation is called for all around us. Therefore, give thought today not to independence but interdependence.

Think of all those individuals who get us through a day with their labors: the South American coffee grower, the dairy farmer who provides the milk and eggs; the subway motorman, the taxi driver, the oil field worker, the policeman, the sanitation worker, the mailman, the telephone employees who punch the switchboards, the grocer and his suppliers, the barber, the dressmaker, the doctor, the lawyer, the congressman, the judge, the novelist, the poet, the cook, the teacher, the waitress. Were it not for all these good folk and many more we would be as helpless as Robinson Crusoe when he first reached his island, outcasts in a wilderness of confusion, because no person is really independent.

There's nothing quite so sad as a person so independent by nature as to compulsively refuse the guidance or assistance or love of those who offer help in his desperation. Man is born a helpless creature, totally in need of protection and nurture. Maturing a bit he aspires to independence. Exclaims the child, "I want to do it myself". This spirit can sometimes lead one into the far country, as it were, as it did with the Prodigal Son, with thoughts of standing, walking, working - succeeding alone, completely alone. Whereas in actuality no one has ever succeeded, in any endeavor, who has not in some way been dependent upon the power of God within himself and upon the hands of others around him contributing in ways both direct and indirect.

When Jesus stressed "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself", He was dealing with what we term independence and interdependence.

MATURING PROCESS

I believe that one really matures in a spiritual sense upon realizing that we must feed each other in life. Said Jesus, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me". You cannot have prosperity unless you help others to prosper. You cannot have harmony unless you are willing to promote the harmony of the world.

This means that we must love God to establish a consciousness of being "within - dependent", and love our neighbor to be interdependent. The great key to freedom, to true independence, is love. Turn on the switch of love for other people, for your work, for all of your experiences, for life itself. Avoid from now on the mistake of simply tolerating people, putting up with them, enduring them. We are able to love when we understand how much we need each other and how much we are interdependent, and when we learn to appreciate people for what they are and what they do!

ILLUSTRATIONS

There is an interesting Tibetan greeting in which two persons bow, extend their hands palms open, and stick out their tongues, indicating symbolically that there are no knives in their hands or evil words on their tongues.

Now, I'm not suggesting that you take up this mode of greeting and acknowledging your friends, but you would certainly do well in practice to indicate that there is no malice in your intentions, no vicious words on your tongue. When we realize the spirit of interdependence, we no longer let ourselves get out of tune with the infinite in the consciousness of pride and egotism and willfulness. We are grateful to associates, friends, neighbors, who are channels through which much of our good comes to us, and we are not so concerned as we were formerly as to who goes first or who gets all the credit.

I have always loved the story of the willful violin, who was very old and of great value and of which he was very conscious, boasting to the other instruments in the orchestra that he had been made by Stradivarius himself and alleging that he could if he wished produce the world's most beautiful music.

But one day the violin's owner was assigned to second violin in a series of orchestrations. The violin's pride was hurt and he angrily decided to teach everyone a lesson for not properly appreciating him by getting out of tune and staying that way. He thereby spoiled the music of the entire orchestra and before long there was talk of his owner and he being released and of his being sold to a second hand dealer.

"See here" said the cello one day when the violin was being his worst. "Why don't you get back in tune and express the beautiful music that is in you? Play second violin so well they will want you back on first part. Come on, get back with the rest of us instruments and with the director". Well, the violin followed the wise advice of the cello, taking his place humbly as second violin and poured out his soul as best he could in beautiful music, back in tune again, whereupon his own was reassigned to first violin and never again did he have to play second fiddle to anyone. ~~owner~~

CLOSING

So many of us go through life playing second fiddle because we insist upon being independent - willfully out of harmony with the needs and pace of our fellow man.

So, I say today on this July 4th weekend - our day of national independence -

that we need to declare our interdependence - to declare how much we need one another, to get involved in the stream of love for one another.

Needing one another. Respecting one another. Loving one another - I believe can solve our national political problems and help to meet those challenges of our day - both great and small. Let this be a DECLARE DAY, and whoever you are, and wherever you go - declare your INTERDEPENDENCE and say to all those who help and serve and guide and protect your life,

"Friend, I thank you for helping me to make my life what it is - for giving me the gift of freedom. And I thank you for holding my hand in time of difficulty, and for sharing in the tasks with which we are involved so that we can all live in a land of freedom and prosperity for all."

PRAYER On this day of national independence, make us to be more inter dependent...realizing that our common destiny is bound up with each other's life.

Thankful that we live in a land where we may worship as we choose, that we can come together in this church this day and share in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

May the bread and the wine open our eyes, O God, to the presence of the Christ spirit. Bind us more closely to each other and to Him and lift up our hearts and minds to You - that we may go forth from here strengthened, steadied, seeing life from higher ground - renewed in body and soul, and filled with peace, love and courage.

God of comfort, our thoughts reach out to include those in need of your healing touch - those who are ill, those who have lost loved ones, those who are torn by the bewilderment of severed relationships, those whose hopes have temporarily been smashed.

Be with each of us and answer now the unspoken prayers offered to thee in this House of Worship. Amen