

OF MELTING POTS AND APPLE PIE: LET FREEDOM RING

The *American Freedom Train* toured the country in 1975–76 to commemorate our nation’s Bicentennial. For me, the timing was perfect. At 12 years of age, I was sufficiently impressionable to recall the celebrations, and it served as good news following the ending of the contentious Vietnam War a little more than a year before. The train consisted of 10 cars carrying American treasures all across the country, with stops in all 48 contiguous states. It included **George Washington’s copy of the Constitution**, the original Louisiana Purchase and even **Judy Garland’s** dress from the *Wizard of Oz*. It made its stop here right around my birthday, as I recall, at the end of August in 1975. I also recall the tall ships sailing into New York Harbor filled me with pride for my country. The famed **Arthur Fiedler** conducted the Boston Pops in the playing of the *1812 Overture*, ending in a flurry of fireworks. (Sadly, city organizers have warned that the July 4th fireworks will only be visible from within CHS Stadium in Lowertown, and not from Harriet Island, Cathedral Hill or the State Capitol Mall.) How disappointing! Bring them back up here!

Of course, under the surface, we were a divided nation in 1976. The *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision was just three years old, and I hardly understood its full implications. But where are we now? To me, by any reasonable sense of objectivity, we are an extremely divided nation and we must legitimately ask if indeed we are still a melting pot, as opposed to a tightly knit conglomeration of ethnic and socio-economic neighborhoods that have little to do with one another. An article in last week’s **Star Tribune** caught my eye, noting that for the first time in a century, the geographical boundaries of Minneapolis-Saint Paul are on pace to grow instead of shrink with respect to the suburbs. The share of the population in the cities themselves is growing in comparison to the seven-county metro area.

Minneapolis has added 37,000 residents since 2010, half of them moving onto just 7 percent of the city’s landmass along the river from the North Loop to the Mill District to the University of Minnesota. Saint Paul too has added 19,000 residents, many in the Lowertown area. **Pierre “Pig’s Eye” Parrant** would be amazed how his French-speaking settlement has grown! City growth can be advantageous when properly managed. Minneapolis is suddenly sprawling with luxury apartments and condos. The tougher questions center upon who is moving into which neighborhood, affordability of housing, and the ethnic make-up of the communities. The Cedar-Riverside neighbor on the edge of downtown Minneapolis is home to 8,000 residents, many of whom are Somalis. It is nestled between two freeways and separated by the river from the rest of Minneapolis. It effectively operates like its own village. Why is this significant?

About 130 years ago in Saint Paul, newly arrived Catholics of Austrian heritage populated the Frogtown neighborhood, worshipping at Saint Agnes. At the turn of the 20th century, Italians immigrants settled on the upper levee. In those days, the communities tended to become quite insular and this concerned our Church leadership. But just fifty years later the community was uprooted, its houses condemned following several devastating floods. The residents dispersed, though a bevy of Italian businesses (**Cossetta’s, DeGidio’s, Mancini’s and Bonfe’s**) remain on West 7th St.

In 1888, while attending an event at **Guardian Angels in Chaska**, a German national parish, **Archbishop John Ireland** stunned the crowd by saying: “Through an exaggerated love of old habits and trans-Atlantic lands, are you to forget the present and the future, and reduce to social inferiority your sons and daughters?...Your children are American; their hopes and prospects are bound up in the fold of her flag...” True enough, Ireland grew up speaking English— it was his native language. But he also spent eight years in seminary studies in France, having been sent there by our first bishop, Joseph Cretin. Upon his arrival as a fourteen-year-old, Ireland had to sink or swim in French. His experience helped shape his own passionate belief in the necessity of assimilation. When I arrived in Rome as a 42-year-old “new” student, my professors showed no sympathy—after just seven weeks of studying Italian, I was expected to listen, read, write **and speak** in class, all in Italian. It was part of the deal. And while I admit my tendency romanticize the past (after all, in 1976 disco flourished)— still, what kind of country are we seeing in 2017? Are we a melting pot? Do we share common values?

Are we true to the ideals of our Founding Fathers? Consider: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America...appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, (declare independence)– And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor” (Declaration of Independence; emphasis added). Do we rely on the protection of Divine Providence and appeal to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions? If not, why not? While we cannot effect change single-handedly, we certainly can love our country’s ideals, striving to live them by applying our Catholic faith to our daily lives. We change our nation one person at a time, beginning with ourselves. May we strive to live the ideals both of our faith and our country, seeing no contradiction between them. May God speak to our heart, and bless our nation abundantly.

- Begin your Independence Day Holiday with Mass at 9:00 a.m. Patriotic hymns will be sung. On both Monday and Tuesday we will observe a special schedule. See page 7.
- I recently attended the funeral of **Fr. James Stromberg**, a brilliant professor of philosophy at the then College of St. Thomas. More importantly, he was always first and foremost a faithful priest. He was an inveterate baseball fan and once attended a Giants game in San Francisco in which the starting pitcher-catcher duo both hit grand slams in the same game, a major league first! *Requiescat in pace.*
- I gave a tour to a pilgrimage group from the **Diocese of Gaylord, MI**. They made quite a loop, visiting Shrines at Holy Hill and LaCrosse, WI as well as the Marquette, MI Cathedral, in honor of the intrepid Bishop Baraga. Archbishop Hebda visited with the group and they loved re-connecting with their former bishop. But I watched ’em like a hawk, ensuring that they did not sneak him on the bus to reclaim his services!
- Speaking of pilgrimages, I’m hoping to take a day to explore Prairie du Chien, WI, the burial site of **Fr. Lucien Galtier**– first pastor of the log chapel of Saint Paul. After leaving Saint Paul, he returned to France for two years only to sail back across the pond, serving his last days as a priest in the Diocese of Milwaukee.
- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 against the state of Missouri, which had denied state funding to refurbish a playground, solely because it was attached to a Lutheran school. Indeed, a great victory for **Religious Liberty**.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector