

The Reverend's Ruminations



Greetings to you from sunny and warm Fort Jackson, SC! You may be thinking that central South Carolina is a strange place to vacation in late June, and you'd be right. It wouldn't have been my first choice to once again endure the oppressive early-summer humidity of the South, but sometimes Army training opportunities come along when I least expect them!?!

Such was the case at the beginning of June, when an email arrived in my inbox offering a few late-notice slots for Army Reserve or National Guard chaplains to attend a two-week class called the Operational Religious Support Leader Course. A quick check of my calendar showed no big events or appointments on the horizon, so after jumping through the requisite "hoops" to get enrolled, receive orders, and get a plane ticket, here I am at the Army's Chaplain Center and School, jotting some "ruminations" to share with you as we move into July.

Our nation will soon pause to celebrate its independence, draping ourselves in red, white, and blue to express patriotism in various ways on the Fourth of July. But let us not forget the freedom of religion that drew so many of our early immigrant ancestors to make this country what it is today. In many places around the world to this day, people are still not allowed to freely choose whom they will worship.

The writer of Psalms, though originally speaking to the nation of Israel, offers some words of wisdom for us to ponder during our patriotic gatherings, and indeed throughout the year:

"Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage. The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind. From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth—he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds.

A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save. Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you."
(Psalm 33:12-22 from the New Revised Standard Version)

I hope you will take some time during our national holiday (and every day, in fact) to pray for our country and its leaders as we continue to face very real challenges both here and abroad. God has blessed America—and by keeping our faith firmly planted in the one who creates, sustains, and redeems, we can ensure that our fair nation will continue to serve as a beacon of religious and personal freedom to the rest of the world for ages to come.

*Pro Deo et Patria (For God and Country),
Rev. Cory Germain*