

*Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees sweet freedom's song;  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.*

**Samuel Francis Smith, 1831**

**19 June 2020**

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I greet you at the close of another momentous week. Although still in the throes of a deadly pandemic, and facing stern challenges brought on by calls for social and racial justice, there nonetheless are glimmers of hope and signs of change. Principal among these are two Supreme Court rulings one protecting transgender employees from being fired solely due to their gender identity; and the other preventing the DACA program from being terminated. The latter refers to the program allowing children of illegal immigrants (brought to this country when they were very young) to continue to live and work here without fear of deportation. The first is a triumph for equal protection under the law for all citizens; and the second is a victory for the aspirations of the 'dreamers' Americans in all respects but birth who have already contributed greatly to the strength and success of their adopted nation.

Just as significantly, today is Juneteenth commemorating June 19, 1865, the date when the last former slaves in America (in Galveston, Texas), finally learned that they were free. Although President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had gone into effect on January 1, 1863, many southern plantation owners had kept the news from their slaves, for fear of their escape and to exact more labor from them. Since then, Juneteenth has remained black America's Independence Day, its own Fourth of July, and a cause for celebration even in the face of discrimination, terror, and injustice. Given what (I pray) is a renewed and vital awareness of our nation's 'original sin' of black chattel slavery and the systemic racism stemming from that, its encouraging to hear calls for making Juneteenth a national holiday and so a day set aside when all Americans, black and white, might honor the basic freedoms granted to every human being by a loving and liberating God.

And so a day set aside, moreover, to honor those whose ancestors were denied for centuries exercise of that most precious gift their own liberty yet who have contributed so widely and richly ever since to the success of liberty and the building up of America. Author Jamelle Bouie reminds us of these contributions in his recent New York Times article, *Why Juneteenth Matters*, suggesting there are others among our country's 'founders' we can look to and admire and to whom we should extend our gratitude and our praise:

Juneteenth may mark just one moment in the struggle for emancipation, but the holiday gives us occasion to reflect on the profound contributions of enslaved black Americans to the cause of human freedom. It gives us another way to recognize the central place of slavery and its demise in our national story. And it gives us an opportunity to remember that American democracy has more authors than the shrewd lawyers and erudite farmer-philosophers of the Revolution, that our experiment in liberty owes as much to the men and women who toiled in bondage as it does to anyone else in this nation's history.

Given such reaffirming reminders and hopeful signs, and with courage borne out of hope, may you enjoy a restful, thoughtful, peace-filled and Spirit-centered weekend. Adding to that spirit,

please 'tune in' Sunday at 9am for our live-streamed celebration of Holy Eucharist and stay for the social time afterwards! I'll be 'seeing' you soon!

Many Blessings,  
Fr. Gordon +