

**INDEPENDENCE DAY 2010**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**DEUT. 10.17 ST. MATT. 5.43**



Be perfect, Jesus tells us, just like our Father in heaven is perfect. How do we do that? We can start by loving others, including those who have hurt us.

Benjamin Franklin once wrote that for America to work its citizens had to be virtuous. For peace and justice to be realized, we needed to do good things. We needed to show kindness and compassion toward each other. We needed to help those who were less fortunate. We needed to show hospitality to strangers. And we needed to learn how to forgive those who had hurt us. Franklin believed the best place to learn how to be virtuous was in church.

The Lesson from Deuteronomy reminded the Jews they were once strangers in a strange land. They depended on the kindness of other strangers for their survival. God provided Moses to lead them out of Egypt into a land they could call their own. Moses told them to remember the time they spent in Egypt and to show the same kindness and compassion to strangers they had been shown. They would show God how much they love him by loving strangers.

We show our love for God every Sunday. We come together as Anglican Catholic Christians to hear about God's love and receive Holy Communion. We pray for peace in the troubled places throughout the world and we ask God to turn the hearts of those who do evil things around so they may do good things. We have fun at coffee hour. Every week we do this...and no one stops us from practicing our Faith, the Faith Saint Paul said he received from Jesus and has passed on to us. We must always thank God our Father for the gift of freedom we have to worship him without Government interference.

Bishop William White was also concerned about the Faith passed on to us by the Apostles. He was the first Anglican bishop of Pennsylvania. He was the rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia, for fifty-seven years...perhaps that's a record! His most famous parishioners were George and Martha Washington. And Benjamin Franklin is buried at Christ Church.

Bishop White was a supporter of the American Revolution. After Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, American Anglicans were faced with a problem. They needed a new American Prayer Book. The proposed book contained a service of Morning Prayer with prayers and collects thanking God for the American victory. The service was to be used in every church in the country on every July 4<sup>th</sup> "forever".

Most of the parish priests had been loyal to the Crown. Bishop White believed to force them to read the proposed service was unkind and would make them feel bad. What was needed was compassion. Bishop White didn't want to see the new American Prayer Book become a political tool. He would have understood well the lesson about kindness and compassion from Deuteronomy.

Bishop White prevailed and the proposed service was excluded from the first American Prayer Book of 1789. The lessons we read today first appeared in our 1928 Prayer Book. I think Bishop White would have been pleased to read the Collect in which we thank God for the liberties the founding fathers won for us, and the awesome responsibility we have to use those liberties wisely.

We can begin using those liberties wisely by applying the Gospel message to love others in the way we want to be loved and doing what Saint James tells us to do: take care of orphans and widows and those in need. Kindness, hospitality, compassion and forgiveness are what Christianity is all about...and what we are all about.

Saint Paul tells us we don't need to worry about wandering around aimlessly with no place to go. Our true citizenship, Paul says, is in heaven. We are members of God's family...we are his children.

Be perfect, Jesus tells us, just like our Father in heaven is perfect. When we show the kind of love God expects from us...kindness, hospitality, compassion, and forgiveness...we are being perfect, just like our Father in heaven is perfect.

