

# MUCH TO CELEBRATE THIS JULY 4TH

**Bill Donohue**

As a veteran who loves America, and as a proud Catholic, I am delighted that the Catholic League is showcasing the religious roots of our freedoms on a digital billboard in Times Square. Besides tourists, soccer fans from all over the world will be in town for the World Cup, and many will gather in Times Square for the festivities. Our message will be seen by millions over the two-week period prior to the Fourth of July.

On pp. 7-9 in this issue of *Catalyst*, you will see a report, prepared by our staff, on the status of religious liberty, racial and ethnic minorities, and women that existed in 1776 and that exists today. We have a short summary comparing conditions in the USA to that of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Eurasia (Russia), Europe and Asia.

My reason for this assignment is to challenge the left-wing notion that the USA is an inherently flawed nation that never lives up to its promises. Really? Compared to what? Compared to other parts of the world? They've got to be kidding.

This is something that has bugged me for decades. When I taught a college course on Social Problems, I assigned a textbook that covered a wide range of subjects: racial and ethnic groups, the poor, women, and many other categories. Invariably, students learned how unjust America is. It was more radical propaganda than anything else.

I countered by discussing how each of these classes of people fared in 1776 and how they fare today. The progress was incredible. I then discussed how these same classes of people are doing today around the world. My goal was to put in historical and cross-cultural context how people were treated

in the past and how they are treated today, in the USA and abroad. That is a realistic yardstick to measure progress.

The problem with textbooks on Social Problems is the same with contemporary analysis of America— the comparison is not between where we were, and where other countries are today; it is between existing conditions and some never-never land.

This approach found root in the Enlightenment, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was common then, and it is common today, to compare current conditions to the ideal. This conclusion is contrived and ordained: of course current conditions are found wanting. Today, left-wing professors use the blackboard to describe their utopian vision of how people should be treated, and then they can do what they delight in doing— showing how we failed.

We didn't fail—they did. They failed their students by comparing America today to some fairy land of perfection. That is not realistic. And by the way, who are they to complain? Take a close look at their lives and it will soon be revealed how dramatically flawed they are. Worse, take a good look at the Marxist countries they have supported historically, and then do a body count.

Take slavery. Harvard sociologist Orland Patterson has done the best work on this subject, and he noted that there is not a single place in the world which has not experienced slavery. When the USA was founded, only in western Europe was there no slavery. It was not declared illegal in Africa until 1981, and it still exists in several parts of the continent today.

In our country, the Founders could have done what the revolutionary winners have always done—rule with an iron fist. Instead, they did something that to this day is a freak: they wrote a Constitution that literally took power away from them. They came up with three branches of government (the executive, legislative and judicial) and three sectors of control (the

federal, state and local).

If they had been like all of those who came before them, they would have engaged in a power grab, crafting an all-powerful executive branch at the federal level. Our freedoms today derive from their willingness to divest themselves of the power they achieved.

The Declaration of Independence made plain that our rights are unalienable and that they come from God, our Creator, not government. There were plenty of shortcomings in 1776, but without the Declaration, the struggle for greater rights could not have taken place. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. understood this—he explicitly heralded the Declaration as the prime measure that African Americans could access to achieve equal rights.

If King understood this verity, why don't our carping critics? There is a sizable segment in our society today which is fixated on the worst elements in American history. Many of their observations are demonstrably false and this can easily be disproven. But we don't have to go tit-for-tat with them. We just need to ask one question: If America is so bad, why do people from all over the world want to live here? Why do all of these non-white people want to live in a country ruled by "white supremacists"? It is such bunk.

We have much to be thankful for in 2026. Happy Birthday America!