



My Dear Parishioners,

Each year as we approach the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend, I share my esteem for a book entitled *If You Can Keep It*. Published in 2016, its short text has proven itself not only true but prophetic. Author Eric Metaxas salutes the reality of American Liberty and shares how such liberty is to endure. The book's title sets the stage and originates from an exchange between Dr. Benjamin Franklin and Mrs. Powell of Philadelphia. On a hot day in the Summer of 1787, as the good doctor was exiting Constitution Hall in Philadelphia, he was accosted by Mrs. Powell of Philadelphia. She saw him leave the building and asked him, "Well, Doctor Franklin, what have we got? A Republic or Monarchy?" His reply: A Republic, madam --- if you can keep it."

Those last five words formed not just the title and the theme of the book but as Metaxas explains, they point to the sacred vocation of each American. Namely, keeping our republic. Monarchies don't need to be kept by the people, but republics --governments of, for and by the people ---do. They come with lots of duties and those duties require three things: Virtue, Faith and Freedom, Freedom to live virtuous lives based on Faith.

A priest friend of mine has a custom of ending his homilies with the words: ***"May God bless you and Mary keep you."*** I've always been struck by that expression, Mary keeping me. That is a particularly tender action and while a bit distinct from God's blessing. It points to our need-- not just blessed by God -- but kept by Mary. Good Moms and Dads do this in an exceptional way. Not just giving life but keeping, caring for it. And how great is our need to be kept! This points to the ongoing nature of our lives and what is true of our lives is true of our country and our Church.

There is growing discussion today about what being an American means, about what being a Catholic means. At minimum, it means that we are citizens of this land, that we are baptized in the faith. But such beginnings demand keeping. It is very easy to overlook the duties and responsibilities that come with being an American or a Catholic Christian. The duty of keeping the promise of freedom, of keeping the gift of faith.

Can a baptized Christian lose the faith? Can America lose its identity? Absolutely. Jesus goes so far as to say that even the one who calls him "Lord, Lord", may not be recognized by Him in the Kingdom! Which is why holidays and holydays are so important. They remind us of who we are and give us opportunity to keep our sacred duty.

As we mark this holiday weekend and this 4<sup>th</sup> of July Sunday, let us pray for the grace to live our vocation well, to keep the freedom we have received, by living virtuous, grateful and faith-filled lives.

Peace,

Fr Rogers