

“IN GOD WE TRUST”



**Reflections and Prayers
for
The United States of America**

IN GOD WE TRUST

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Opening Reflection

**Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just.
And this be our motto - "In God is our trust; "
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.
Francis Scott Key, 1779-1843**

Reflection

This fourth Chorus of “The Star-Spangled Banner” makes the bold proclamation, “In God We Trust”.

Trust is challenging for most of us. I am honored to introduce these brief reflections on our National Motto, with the prayerful expectation that these reflections will call forth the virtues imbedded in each of us as people on a faith journey.

Trust invites faith, hope, love and freedom, especially emotional freedom. We mindlessly handle ‘money’, our currency, fingering words “IN GOD WE TRUST”. Yet, we painfully experience our lack of trust in one another, our bigotry and unwelcoming ways. May these reflections awaken our deeper communal yearning for God.

Call to Action

Sing this chorus of the Star-Spangled Banner with your hands cupped over your heart. Hide the stress of current days in the sound of these words allowing your heartbeat to confirm IN GOD WE TRUST.

**Sister Carole A. Riley, CDP, Ph.D.
Executive Director, WVIS
Charleston, West Virginia**

FAITH



The Mighty Oak became the Official Tree of the United States in 2004.
The oak is the symbol of strength.

The Oak in Scripture

...that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of
the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Isaiah 61:1-3

Prayer

God, help the people of the United States become like the Mighty
Oak as examples of righteousness so that you may be glorified. Amen.

FAITH
Reflection One

“Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.”
Saint Francis of Assisi

Reflection

How does one become “An Instrument of Peace” when the media indicates that there is so much unrest in the United States now? The solution is through FAITH. God will give us the FAITH we need to become “An Instrument of Peace” if we just trust in God.

- On December 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution of the United States. The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights encourages, ensures and calls us to pray.
- On June 22, 1942 Congress officially adopted “The Pledge of Allegiance.”
- On June 14, 1954, Flag Day, Congress added, the two words, UNDER GOD to the Pledge to the Allegiance to suggest how we should pray for our country.
- On July 30, 1956, President Eisenhower signed into law IN GOD WE TRUST as the Official Motto of the United States, so we can further learn that FAITH in God should be the ultimate cornerstone in all our prayers for the United States.

Call to Action

As an act of FAITH in God, pray for the United States of America.

Bob Harrison, Ph.D.
Charleston, West Virginia

FAITH
Reflection Two

**“Who are we that You are mindful of us,
the Son of man that You care for us?”**

Psalm 8:4

Reflection

We have an opportunity to believe in the goodness of God as we open our eyes each day and experience the gift of life in our country. The globalization of the nations has brought us a deep appreciation for the many, many blessings we experience.

We enjoy in our own country so many freedoms, such diversity and opportunities. We can respond by caring which extends not only to each other but also for those around the world who are in need. May we never forget the blessings of our God and recognize the gifts of life, of religious freedom, and God’s countless privileges.

Who ARE we that God has been so good to us? No matter what our present situation, may we believe in the graciousness of God in bestowing on us life as Americans.

Call to Action

Today I will continue to believe in the beauty, the strength and the resiliency of our country.

- Can I appreciate a gift of being an American that I have not previously seen?
- How am I called to believe in and share my gifts of freedom with another?

Sister Ritamary Schulz, ASCJ

Associate Spiritual Director, Retreat Director, WVIS

FAITH
Reflection Three

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”
2 Corinthians 5:7

Reflection

As our country continues to walk in the darkness of gun violence, an ongoing pandemic, racial injustice, economic strife, and political unrest, we are invited to pray to see with eyes of faith. Eyes that have a clear vision amidst the storms of life and be on the lookout for glimpses and vistas of the Kingdom of God here and now.

When we walk by faith and see with the eyes of faith, we see God working everywhere!

The doctor who spends extra time with a patient who is fearful.

The teacher who selflessly extends extra effort for a student struggling.

The minister who opens the church early so that others can find sanctuary.

The worker who puts in an honest day of work.

The child who stands up for another child who is being bullied.

Call to Action

Spend some time today making a list of some of the ways you have experienced God opening your eyes and soul to see with eyes of faith.

Dr. Thomas Octave
Associate Professor, Saint Vincent College
Associate Spiritual Director, WVIS

FAITH
Reflection Four

**“Faith is taking the first step even when
you don’t see the whole staircase.”
Martin Luther King, Jr**

Reflection

There are some days when it seems like every wish or dream is coming true. And, then there are some days when the clouds begin to fill in and block the light. It’s on these darker days when our faith is needed the most.

Focusing on our faith every day is essential to keeping it resilient and ready to go. Faith needs exercise! One way to find yourself coming back from a difficult situation where our faith has been tested, is to begin looking for the small, but positive things happening around you.

Every good thought or encouraging experience is not an accident; these are signs to remind us of our purpose, and the hope for what is waiting for each of us.

Call to Action

Faith is action! Getting involved with an organization you believe can make a positive difference in the lives of others. Get involved with the people and causes that touch your heart the most. Watch your faith increase as your efforts to “make a difference” are realized.

Mary Malamisura
Friend of WVIS
Bluefield, West Virginia

FAITH
Reflection Five

From Fear to Faith: Restoring Civility

“Observing the formal conditions of civility is one of the ways in which we communicate respect for others and generate habits of moral equality in everyday life of a democracy.”

Richard Boyd (Urban Studies. Vol.43 No.5 2006)

Reflection

Our nation’s democracy has been oppressed by polarization, fear, and incivility. Fear consumes our need for control and we find ways to protect our second amendment rights with little regard to the implications of a country crippled by the epidemic of violence.

Civility is the process of finding common ground, showing respect, and finding the courage to stay in the crucial conversation when vulnerability runs high. We move from a mindset of “Us vs. Them” to “United We Stand.” We together learn how to resolve differences by first establishing common ground.

Call to Action

Civility is demonstrated by mutual respect, belief and inherent good of all people, and seeking common ground whenever possible. Write a letter of gratitude to a servant leader who leads and inspires the common good.

Sister Linda Hylla, CDP, LCSW
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Granite City, Illinois

FAITH

Reflection Six

Reflection

Being happy is not without struggles, storms, pains, mistakes, tears, defeats. Happiness is based on faith and not giving up. In *“Palco de vida”* (Stages of life), attributed to the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, the poet shared some ideas which are paraphrased as follows:

- You can have flaws, be anxious and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world.
- Remember that being happy is not about having a sky without storm, a road without accidents, a job without effort, a relationship without disappointments. ... it's about learning from failures.
- To be happy is to stop feeling like a victim and become the author of your own fate... thanking God every morning for the miracle of life... courage to hear a ‘No’ and find confidence in criticism... kissing your children, cuddling your parents, having poetic moments with your friends, even when they hurt us.
- ...when you make a mistake, start over...only then will you be in love with life...discover being happy isn't having a perfect life...use tears to irrigate tolerance. Use your defeats to train your patience.
- Use your mistakes with the serenity of the sculptor. Use pain to tune into pleasure...obstacles to open the windows of intelligence. Never give up ... Above all never give up on the people that love you. **Never give up on being happy...life is an incredible show.**

Call to Action

- How can you use these suggestions to ‘be happy’ and to share that happiness?
- Today, will you spread happiness to those around you, especially those who are struggling?

Margaret (Susie) Pace, M. Ed., M.A.
Princeton, West Virginia

HOPE



The American Bison became the official mammal of the United States in 2016. The American Bison is a Symbol of hard work and dedication.

The American Bison in Scripture

Come to me, all you who labor...Take my yoke upon you and learn from me;
...and you will find rest for yourselves.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

Prayer

God, grant the people of the United States the hope, hard work and dedication of the American Bison to help lead our country out of whatever is holding us captive. Amen

HOPE

Reflection One

**“All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew,
me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.”**

Reflection

These words from the hymn “All My Hope Is Founded” by Herbert Howells, reminds us that any hope we have of really doing God’s will depends on our trusting God, not ourselves. They point us to the example of Jesus as he faced death on the cross and prayed that “This cup may pass.” Jesus quickly adds, “Not my will, but thine.”

It is a grave error for us to ask God to do what we think is best. A country cannot say “IN GOD WE TRUST” and then direct God to do what we want.

Call to Action

Be open to the truth that God, ever faithful, will guide us in the right way. God “calls my heart to be his own.” And with my heart comes my will, my body, my being, dedicated to God’s direction. God makes the same call on your heart.

The Reverend Kent Higgins, Episcopal priest
Charleston, West Virginia

HOPE

Reflection Two

“That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the Living God, who is the Savior of all people and especially of those who believe.” 1 Timothy 4:10

Reflection

Saint Paul is writing of the stress, despair and confusion that will come during our lives. As Americans, we can recall the times in our country’s history where the hour was dark, and our future faint. Age-old Empires have tried to see us to our end; economic depressions have pushed us to poverty; and our own iniquities have mired our progress as a nation. Whenever our mettle was tested, our Christian sense of hope endured and preserved us.

Let us not, as Americans, lose hope in God. Too many Americans tend to reject God’s promise of hope. If we fix our gaze on His divine path for us as a nation, He will carry us into the future.

Call to Action

Our God is a god of hope, life, and love.

What causes me to lose hope in myself and America as a nation?

Acknowledge the ways and times God has given you hope to confront the future.

Adrian Langford
Charleston, West Virginia

HOPE

Reflection Three

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” Desmond Tutu

Reflection

What is hope? The spiritual definition of hope is believing good things will happen with faith in a higher power.

We are experiencing incredibly challenging times in our world. Sometimes, the darkness is disorienting, making it hard for us to see our way forward. A tiny ray of hope can break open the darkest storm cloud, and a glimmer of hope illuminates the end of a long, dark tunnel. As a Christian, believing in God’s promises and His ability to fulfill them gives us hope! God promises:

- To be with us. ...
- To protect us ...
- To strengthen us. ...
- To answer our prayers. ...
- To give us rest. ...
- To work everything out for our good. ...
- To take care of all our needs. ...
- To free us from sin...
- To let nothing separate us from Him...
- To give us everlasting life...

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

Call to Action

What darkness in your life needs God’s light?
Which promise of God can you trust to give you hope?

Gina Boggess, Faith Formation Coordinator
Sacred Heart Parish, Princeton, West Virginia

HOPE

Reflection Four

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ESV

Reflection

If God meant simply to convey the idea that the Spirit lives within the believer, He could well have used words such as “home,” “house,” or “residence.” But, by choosing the word “temple” to describe the Spirit’s dwelling, He conveys the idea that our bodies are the shrine, or the sacred place, in which the Spirit not only lives, but is worshiped, revered, and honored.

Call to Action

Although the United States is a land of plenty, the US is also ravaged by the effects of stress. The effects of stress are deadly to our body.

- Ask for eyes to see opportunities to serve
- Pray for the willingness to follow where the Holy Spirit leads

Clinton Shrewsbury, B.S. Dietetics
C.O.P.E. Health Coach and Personal Trainer
Scott Depot, West Virginia

HOPE

Reflection Five

“... knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts.”

Romans: 5:4-5

Reflection

There is much in our world that can cause us to lose hope. “How do YOU keep hope alive?” I asked my sister. She responded, “As President of the Art Guild at our retirement community, I was calling members and reached DeeDee’s husband who told me that due to her Alzheimer’s she would not be able to continue.

‘I’ll be at the Studio on Monday morning. Why don’t you bring DeeDee over and we’ll see what happens.’ DeeDee arrived to find canvases, paints, and several inflated balloons set up and I took her hands in mine, grasped a balloon in each, dipped in the paint and began painting with the balloons as paint brushes. After an hour DeeDee put her arms around me, crying, and thanked me and took her three beautiful paintings home. I keep hope alive by making a difference in someone’s life if I can.”

Call to Action

What action can you take today to keep hope alive?

Eileen Chwalibog
WVIS Associate Spiritual Director
Huntington, West Virginia

HOPE

Reflection Six

Thomas Merton's (1915-1968) passion for peace flowed from the depth of his union with Christ. This "Prayer for Peace" (Adapted here) was read and entered in the Congressional Record April 27, 1963

Reflection

“Merciful God, whose compassion for the errors of [all] is inexhaustible, in your will is our peace. Save us then from our obsessions. Help us to use our science for peace and plenty, not for destruction. Resolve the contradictions, which now grow beyond belief and beyond bearing.

Grant light, grant strength and patience to all who work for peace, to this Congress, our President, our military forces, and our adversaries.

Grant us prudence in proportion to our power, wisdom in proportion to our science, humaneness in proportion to our wealth and might. And bless our earnest will to help all races and peoples to travel, in friendship with us, along the road to lasting peace. But grant us above all to see that our ways are not necessarily your ways.

Grant us to see you, O God of holiness, merciful to [all]. Grant us to seek peace where it is truly found. In your will, O God is our peace. -PRAYER FOR PEACE, Merton.org

Call to Action

“In your will is our peace”! Let this prayer companion you through the day.

Father Bill Petro, M.A.
Associate Spiritual Director
Dunbar, West Virginia

LOVE



The rose became the official flower of the United States in 1986. The rose is the symbol of love and beauty.

The Rose in Scripture

“Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work; they do not spin. Yet, I assure you that Solomon in all his splendor was not arrayed like one of these.” Matthew 6:28 and 29

Prayer

God, teach the people of the United States and me how to grow in love.
Amen

LOVE
Reflection One

*“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God;
and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love”*
1 John 4:7–8

Reflection

Question: What is the greatest evidence of our Christian faith?

Answer: LOVE!

A failure to love our brothers and sisters exposes our lack of love for God. The display of fear, hatred, disrespect, competition, jealousy, power, dominion, and hostility causes tremendous suffering to both the giver and receiver while damaging loving relationships.

Let us be a healing balm for one another by reflecting Christ through performing small acts of kindness, loving, listening, being gentle, humble, generous, encouraging, and praying for others.

The Trinity represents the true perfection of love!

So, go in peace loving and serving one another in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

AMEN.

*“I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as
one, that the world may know that you sent me,
and that you loved them even as you loved Me.”*
John 17: 23

Call to Action

How can you be a reflection of God’s love to others?

Father Sebastian Devasya, VF
Pastor of Sacred Heart Bluefield and Princeton

LOVE
Reflection Two

We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become.

**Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ,
rather it means becoming the image of the beloved,
an image disclosed through transformation.**

**This means we are to become
vessels of God's compassionate love for others.**

St. Clare of Assisi

Reflection

St. Clare, the first Franciscan woman, came from a noble family where the women often looked into mirrors to see their image, how they appeared to others. On first glance, Clare would naturally see her image, her exact likeness.

As she looked deeper, she saw the beloved daughter of God, a visible representation of God. This disclosure enveloped her with light and grace. She knew herself transformed as a vessel of God's love to be poured out for others. She loved God deeply and in that loving God shaped her to become compassionate love for others.

Call to Action

Look deeply at yourself in the mirror. Understand how God sees you, beloved and beautiful. Ponder and act: How will I be a vessel of compassionate love for someone today?

Sister Deborah Lockwood
Franciscan Sister
Redwood City, California

LOVE
Reflection Three

*God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God
and God in him.” 1 John 4: 16 (TNJB)*

Reflection

In our diversity as a nation, we are created in a unity which transcends all barriers. How often do we notice the love we breathe or truly believe in this gift of love or hope that love will abound? How do we learn a language of love?

Why do we make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God in Step Three of A.A.? Why do we offer everything to God, asking only for God’s love and grace, as suggested by Ignatius of Loyola in the Suscipe Prayer?

Love should never be a demand, nor selfish. Our love should allow others to breathe.

Call to Action

Stop to experience the freshness of each breath. Relax into this gift of life. Feel the empowerment. Imagine why and how it ripens and sustains. Treat each inhale as a gift - to be received in a sacred moment and place of perpetuity. Savor the closeness each breadth creates!

Bob Sylvester, M.A.
WVIS Spiritual Direction Associate

LOVE
Reflection Four

“All You Need Is Love”

Reflection

"Love, love, love, love is all you need," sang choirs of diverse people, young and old, black, brown and white, from all over the world. As I watched them--filmed on roof tops, in gyms, in playgrounds, in fellowship halls, in parks--displayed on a big screen in St James Park, celebrating Queen Elizabeth's silver jubilee, tears streamed down my face, aware of God's love through so many people connecting across many countries.

We were all brought together, singing this popular Beatles' song, orchestrated by unseen people. We do not see God either, and yet we can trust in the love that we understand through Jesus who is teacher, friend, and healer, patient, kind, humble and brave--someone who never stops giving to the people around Him. We too can give to others in our daily lives through kindness, through generosity, and in response to the needs within our communities, large or small.

A Call to Action

Reflect on how God's love flows through many people to enrich your life and pray daily to be a help to others.

Reverend Christina St Clair
Pastor/writer
Ashland, Kentucky
www.loyaltyamongwomen.com

LOVE

Reflection Five

“If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal...”

1 Corinthians 13

Reflection

As Saint Paul points out to us, nothing else really matters beyond Love. Everything good is predicated on Love. Where there is no Love there is Evil. When we speak, our speech should be words of Love.

Call to Action

In the highly contentious societal rhetoric that we hear every day, we are *challenged* to react in Love. I recently saw and read what Socrates supposedly said as the test of a Love, “The Sieve Test” of speech.

Socrates reportedly suggests a “Three Sieve Test”. The first question: *Is what is being said the Truth?* The second question: *Is what is being said, said in Kindness?* The third question: *Is what is being said useful?* The three questions to be answered, is it true, is it kind and is it useful?

Ask Yourself,

Am I speaking in Love? Is what I speak gossip, founded or unfounded?
Can I pass Socrates’ Sieve Test?

Deacon Tom Soper
Toledo, Ohio

LOVE
Reflection Six

~ STAYING IN THE PATH ~

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; And lean not
unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways
acknowledge him, And, he shall direct thy paths.*
Proverbs 3:5-9KJV

Reflection

Graduating from High School was an exciting accomplishment, and even more exciting was passing our yearbooks around for our classmates, friends and family to write their congratulatory remarks. My mother was the last person to write in my yearbook, and the above verse from Proverbs 3:5-KJV is what she wrote.

That verse became lifesaving advice to me and has helped me stay in the path of what those words mean: stability during unstable times; answers to unanswered questions; and confidence in God's divine authority to speaks 'His' truth over the powers and adversaries of the world in which we live. Only God's word and infinite wisdom make sense out of the senselessness of the chaos and calamities of our troubled times. Trusting Him, acknowledging his authority, allowing **His peace** to reign and rule in our hearts and minds.

Call to Action

Dear God, help us to embrace the truth in your word as we walk through this life leaning not to our own understanding; but acknowledging you to direct our paths. Amen.

Reverend Marykaye Jacquet
Dallas, Texas

TRUST



The American Bald Eagle became the National Animal in 1782. The eagle represents the bold qualities of trust-strength, power, bravery, courage, renewal and rebirth.

The Eagle in Scripture

...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 31

Prayer

God, increase our trust in you so that our country can soar like the eagle, renewed in strength and hope for the future. Amen.

TRUST
Reflection One

“Fall and we will catch you.”
Trust Fall Exercise

Reflection

The internet has many videos of “**Trust Fall**” events, both that succeed and that fail. Some are quite funny, and show failure on the part of the person falling, or worse, failure by the purported catcher. This “**TEAM BUILDING**” exercise has mixed success. Clearly, trust is hard to come by, and in our culture, is something apparently, we must learn.

Trust in God is difficult. By comparison, believing in God is much easier. There is less commitment. “God? Oh, yeah, I know God.” “Ah, but do you trust God?” Acknowledging the existence of a higher power and trusting that it can impact your own life are two different things.

Building trust requires a relationship. The better you know someone, the easier it is to trust them.

Trust in God grows over time with a daily conscious relationship through prayer and meditation. Letting go of our need to control and being open to God’s grace are gifts that come over time, if we ask for them.

Call to Action

In our daily prayers, ask that God give us the ability to trust.

Pat Riley

**Husband, father, grandfather, brother, in-law, Friend of Bill, cantor,
choir member and retired lawyer**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TRUST
Reflection Two

“The righteous care for the needs of their animals . . .”
Proverbs 12:10

Reflection

God made us in His image so that we too could care for our animals just as His care is recorded throughout Scripture. Surely, He would not have entrusted us with such a responsibility had He not prepared us. Often times becoming involved feels overwhelming, but that is where we must put our trust in God as did Noah.

Recently we aided in the rescue of an abandoned elderly dog roaming our neighborhood needing significant medical attention. We trusted God to help provide the financial means and within one day, we secured the funds through faith and donations.

Call to Action

Trust- An attribute we sometimes suppress due to the uncertainty of the next step.

- Can you make a difference?
- What are the consequences if we do not trust?

Remember, Jesus left the 99 to find the 1. “Saving the life of one animal won’t change the world, but the world will change for that one animal.”

- Author unknown

Please search your heart and consider donating your time or a monetary contribution to help others.

Dustin and Bridgette Crites
Physician Assistant and Dental Hygienist
Elkview, West Virginia

TRUST

Reflection Three

Reflection

Trust is the foundation upon which the legitimacy of public institutions and a functioning democratic system rest.

Trust is important for the success of a wide range of public policies that depend on behavioral responses from the public.

In the longer-term, trust is needed to tackle long term societal challenges such as climate change, aging populations, and the automation of work.

-The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

I am hard-pressed to remember any period, during my lifetime, in which I have had less trust for government. During at least the past six years, dishonesty and self-serving motives have been pervasive at both the federal and state levels and in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

Call to Action

During these perilous times we must trust in God to allow us to take the necessary steps to restore trust and honesty in government. This includes supporting investigations and actions to find the truth and hold accountable those who have violated truth and honesty in government. We must find and support leaders in whom we can trust by campaigning, contributing to, and voting, to allow those leaders to assume office.

Ted Kanner
Congregation B'nai Jacob
Charleston, West Virginia

TRUST Reflection Four

Printed on the US coins and currency, “In God We Trust.”

Reflection

On November 13, 1861, the US Treasury Secretary received a letter from a pastor suggesting that Almighty God be printed on US currency; seven days later, the Treasury Secretary instructed the Director of the Mint to prepare a motto. “Our nation cannot be strong except through the strength of God, and safe except in His defense.”

The Declaration of Independence was written by men who had a foundational belief in God and that God’s laws should be the guide to man’s laws. **There are five references to God in the Declaration of Independence.**

If we were to compare where we, the people of the USA, are today versus the ideal our founding fathers had for democracy, the founding fathers would be in disbelief.

“Trust in God” is more than empty words; it is part of our core belief system based on the truth about who God is, not what we feel or believe God is.

Call to Action

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust in God” with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

In Everything, In “God We Trust”. Amen

Bill Ellis
Charleston, West Virginia

TRUST

Reflection Five

“The... Orthodox liken prayer to entering the cave of a tiger... [yet], the power of God’s grace is such that one who [can] trust God sufficiently [may] enter into the “cave” of the heart, the place where Incarnation [happens], and be transformed into the triumph of love.” Ilia Delio

Reflection

Beneath the over-conversation of our society lies the opportunity for held tension toward growth and becoming. Relying less upon external and more upon internal motivations, giving ourselves the inner conversation of prayer and stillness, we can find ourselves beheld by God... such that we may behold God.

To see, let alone enter, the meadows where this encounter may happen means we must emerge from the thick forests that hold our secrets and our lesser selves. This every day journey travels through the “cave” of prayer where the Holy Spirit anticipates us with forgiveness toward authenticity and the consummation of our joy in Christ.

Call to Action

- Be led by God for ten minutes today through the “cave” of prayer.
- Be held by God for five minutes thereafter in Christ’s joy in us.

Brother Steve Grieco, TOR
Novice
Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania

TRUST

Reflection Six

“The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8

Reflection

The Hebrew word for the breath of God is “**Ruach**”, which we all receive during the Sacrament of Baptism. We also see “**Ruach**” during Mass when the priest breathes on the elements of the bread and wine as they are being Sanctified and then elevated as the body and blood of Christ.

In Greek, the wind is called “**pneuma**” from which we get the word “**pneumatic**” as in air-powered drills. It is a method of driving or powering something.

As we grow in our faith, it is this “**pneuma**” that drives us towards a particular vocation. We cannot fear the direction that God sends us to accomplish His mission, nor can we fully understand how this mission will enhance the quality of life in this country! However, be bold; be brave. As Pope Saint John Paul II would say, “**Duc in Altum!**” (Put out into the deep).

Call to Action

Allow God’s “**pneuma**” to drive me to do His will.

Deacon J. Peter Minogue
Hospital and Prison Chaplain
Forest Hill, West Virginia

FREEDOM



The current flag of the United States was adopted on July 4, 1960. The stripes represent the original 13 Colonies, and the stars represent the 50 states of the Union. The colors of the flag are symbolic as well; red symbolizes hardiness and valor, white symbolizes purity and innocence, and blue represents vigilance, perseverance and justice.

The Flag in Scripture

“May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners!” Psalm 20:5

Prayer

God, grant the people of the United States, the desire to seek Your will and justice in our nation through vigilant prayer and purity of heart.

FREEDOM

Reflection One

“The meaning of freedom is not that we can decide whether or not we are responsible for others; the meaning of freedom is that we can decide whether or not to live up to that responsibility.”
Rabbi Shai Held

Reflection

We live in an era where the understanding of freedom is seen as nothing more than a declaration of personal rights and privileges. The idea that our liberties also afford us the opportunities to embrace our responsibilities to others and become good citizens in the service of our country is growing increasingly lost. Our nation is stronger when freedom is viewed as a gift that we can use to promote the well-being of every citizen.

I am reminded in Rabbi Held’s words that in my faith tradition of Judaism, freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Our obligations to our fellow human beings began when G-d gave us the gift of free will. That gift was given to us as a challenge to act in a responsible fashion. We are commanded by G-d to take our abilities to act freely and use it in this world to help our neighbors and to champion the welfare of all.

Call to Action

In what ways are we taking the freedoms we enjoy in this country to fulfill our obligations to others?

How are we living up to our G-d-given rights to help make this a more loving country for all?

Victor H. Urecki
Rabbi, Congregation B’nai Jacob
Charleston, West Virginia

FREEDOM

Reflection Two

Reflection

In “The Mission of My Life,” Cardinal John Henry Newman reminds us that “God has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do God’s work. Therefore, I will trust God.” In “America the Beautiful” poet Katherine Lee Bates describes us as “Gold needing to be refined.”

Gold becomes pure by removing impurities. God has graciously given us the freedom and responsibility to choose right from wrong. The Ten Commandments and the words and actions of Jesus Christ provide a perfect blueprint for obeying God’s will.

Call to Action

In America, the social media juggernaut bombards us with accounts of individuals and groups who do not live up to the Ten Commandments and the words of Christ. For today’s reflection, let’s celebrate our freedom to choose good over evil and for each of us in our own way, let’s do what we can to responsibly honor God’s gift of freedom.

Edward Kocher, Ph.D., Professor
Duquesne University Mary Pappert School of Music
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

FREEDOM
Reflection Three

Take what is broken, and fix it!

Reflection

These words are at the heart of the definition of true Freedom, and what we may have lost sight of in the United States. We must be constantly asking ourselves what is broken and how do we fix it?

in our nation, in our communities, in our systems and infrastructures and government. In our homes, churches, families and relationships. And, most importantly, even in our individual souls?

We all harbor brokenness. There is nothing too big that by placing our trust in You, we cannot overcome it. You hold more power over us than anything else can. Open our hearts to Godly change, and go to work restoring and redeeming, repairing, and freeing us.

Call to Action

Lord, show us our part in Your divine process to free and equip us to work alongside You. Amen.

Bruce Neal,
West Virginia Reading Association, Executive Director
Charleston, West Virginia

FREEDOM

Reflection Four

Reflection

Freedom is defined as the right to act, speak as one wants without hindrance or restraint, the state of being free.

In God we trust, in God all faith, hope, love and freedom come together as one. (Psalm 118:5-6)

As citizens of heaven and of our beloved country, we are free to choose the positive and life-giving aspects of our life. Or we may wallow in the negative that is not at any time life giving.

IN GOD WE TRUST is an attitude of life that we are free to choose! Over the past few months, we have seen a lot of negativity, shootings and hatred surface in our country. Innocent children being slaughtered, families left in deep pain and sorrow and many questions unanswered.

Where do we go with all this pain and suffering? How do we find the answers? When do we find peace? Why is all this happening?

As we ask and try to find answers to these questions and other questions, we are led back to the powerful motto that our nation is built on – IN GOD WE TRUST!

And, as gold, we need to be refined. The process is painful. We must take action.

Call to Action

Today, I will find the time to love, and to spread that love to one person I meet this day.

Sister Gale Pankowski, SCC, BCC
Catholic Chaplain, Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center,
Livingston, New Jersey

FREEDOM

Reflection Five

Companions on the Journey

**“We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share,
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.
No longer strangers to each other,
no longer strangers in God’s house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care,
by the strength of those who care.”**

Reflection

One of my favorite songs is: “We are companions on the Journey,” In hearing this song, two thoughts surface: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart... and he will make your paths straight.” and “Each of you should use whatever gifts you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God.”

Call to Action

As we continue on our journey, especially in the trying times that exist in our world today, we need to pray for God’s guidance in...

- Living out our Faith, Hope, Love, and Freedom,
- And, using our gifts to walk humbly with each other.

Elaine Soper, PhD
WVIS Spiritual Director
Retired teacher and Associate Dean, WV School of Osteopathic
Medicine
Toledo, Ohio

FREEDOM

Reflection Six

**“Freedom isn’t free! Freedom isn’t free!
You’ve got to pay a price,
You’ve got to sacrifice
For your liberty.”**

Reflection

Copyrighted in 1965 by Up With People, these words and the music by Paul and Ralph Colwell, are as relevant now as they were then; and just as needed now to remind us that we have to sacrifice to keep our liberty, namely freedom. Written at the time of the Viet Nam War, peace was the desire of all. True freedom demands that we work together for the common good...working with respectful, sacrificial love for the good of ALL, then ALL will be truly free.

Call to Action

1. “Freedom is a word often heard today, but if you want to keep it there’s a price to pay. Each generation’s got to win it anew, ‘cause it’s not something handed down to you.”

Passing on freedom...how?

2. “For some people freedom is a waving flag, to do your own thing is another man’s bag, but for ev’ry man’s freedom’s the eternal quest. You’re free to give humanity your very best.”

Pray with “very best”.

Sr. Mary Irene Sorber, SCC, MS
Associate Spiritual Director at WVIS
Charleston, West Virginia

**My Closing Reflection and Prayer
for
The United States of America**

My Reflection for the United States

My Prayer for the United States



Pledge of Allegiance

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

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