

**SUNDAY, JULY 4, 2010**  
**THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

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Dear Friends in Our Lord Jesus:

To this day, the words still convey a sense of power, purpose, majesty, and urgency. And they stand forever as our nation's true and unique "Declaration of Independence." Here is its preamble:

**IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776**

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.

What follows this preamble is one of the most extraordinary documents ever written, signed by 56 men, most of whom suffered massive personal loss in the subsequent war of independence. History shows that 18 of these men were merchants, 12 were farmers, 22 were lawyers or judges, four were clergymen or doctors. Seventeen took up arms, five were captured, 11 had homes destroyed, a dozen went bankrupt, all lost family and friends in the fighting.

Their words remind us that freedom is never free. It requires diligence and sacrifice to preserve it for all. And on this 234th anniversary of our historic declaration, we give thanks to God for the witness and courage of these 56 American heroes.

**-- The Very Rev. Dr. Steve Sellers+**