

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) – July 5, 2026

Many of us will watch fireworks tonight as red, white, and blue sparks brighten the New York skyline and cast their light over the Statue of Liberty.

Against that familiar image, we are invited to remember not only the beauty of the celebration, but also the promise symbolized by that great statue in the harbor.

Long after the words of today's Gospel were written, yet deeply aware of its message, the poet Emma Lazarus gave voice to the Statue of Liberty and to generations of newcomers to America.

**From her beacon-hand glows
world-wide welcome;
her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor
that twin cities frame.**

**"Keep ancient lands your storied pomp!"
cries she with silent lips.
"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.**

**Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"**

These words were a source of hope for our ancestors who braved that long voyage across the oceans to this New World. They held tightly to dreams of an unknown future—not only for themselves, but for the generations who would follow.

Hollywood films often suggest that America was built by the rich and powerful. In truth, much of this nation was built brick by brick by people once treated as castoffs, rejects, and outsiders who made their way to the United States.

Inspired by the Declaration, people have come here for centuries with the hope that life could be better.

If we remain faithful to its principles—and to the Constitution written to secure them—the promise remains: you and America can flourish. And we have.

What began with pioneers huddled along a narrow coastal strip—an ocean away from the civilization they once knew and facing an immense, unfamiliar land—has become a mighty nation spanning a continent.

America has become one of the most prosperous, compassionate, innovative, and open societies the world has known.

Despite our distractions, doubts, and divisions, America still shows what free people can accomplish—for their families and for the nation—when they strive to make the Declaration’s vision real.

Creating America was not easy. Keeping her united has been marked by turmoil, and fulfilling the promises of her founding documents still asks much of us.

Of all the people I have met, I most admire those who help others bear life's burdens.

I am humbled by those who care for elderly parents; by spouses who remain faithful to their promises; and by mothers, fathers, teachers, and nurses who stand beside a child with a developmental disability.

I stand in wonder when I see young people travel to faraway lands to defend our freedom, teach the uneducated, treat dangerous diseases, and advocate for the defenseless.

I learn so much from people in our own parish who visit the lonely, listen to those who are troubled, and go out of their way to find shelter for a homeless family.

As Catholics, we were once treated as unacceptable members of our national family. One of the largest groups promoting that view was the American Protective Association, an anti-immigrant organization of the Gilded Age.

At its height, the organization claimed 2.5 million adherents. Its members swore an oath denouncing the pope and “the diabolical work of the Roman Catholic Church.” Yet 150 years later, an American son from the great State of Illinois sits on the throne of St. Peter.

Today, one in seven U.S. residents was born in another country. More than four in ten U.S. Catholics are either immigrants themselves (29%) or the children of immigrants (14%).

For the rest of us, today—July 4, 2026—is a day of special gratitude. Through no action of our own, we were born here and share in the blessings secured by what was accomplished in Philadelphia in the summer of 1776. We share those blessings alongside all who made the difficult journey to America in search of a better life.

I close with words of congratulations from Pope Leo to the people of the United States on our nation's 250th anniversary.

“May this milestone renew our shared commitment to freedom, justice, opportunity, and democracy.

May Americans honor the courage and vision of those who came before them by strengthening their communities, respecting their differences, and working together toward a more perfect union.

May the Spirit of 1776 continue to inspire hope and unity as the United States of America moves into the future.

In assuring all of you of my prayers for your renewed efforts to strengthen the nation in the principles that guided its Founding Fathers, I entrust you to the intercession of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of this country, that she may continue to watch over America and protect all who dwell here.”

