

July 4th....America's birthday. A day that we traditionally pause for a time of celebration, perhaps a picnic, fireworks (where they are permitted) and a day off work. Yet it makes me sad when I think about what America would be like today without the sacrifice of many generations of proud citizens who loved our country more than themselves. As a young man my father instilled in me the thought that they gave us a tremendous gift...and how do we show our gratitude? By erecting statues? Oh yes, the statues are impressive, but mostly they end up as tourist attractions remembered all too briefly. But recently many of those beloved statues placed by prior generations have been slandered, toppled and destroyed. Placing a wreath on a military grave is a noble gesture, but eventually the wreath withers, dies and is soon forgotten. Speeches are good, but most tend to vanish from memory soon after the words are spoken. Perhaps we should look for the answer in the Scriptures. The First Epistle of John, chapter 3 verse 18: 'Let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth'. So how do we love in deed and truth? We live our lives dedicated to the faithful and intelligent use of our freedom for every single citizen, symbolized by our Grand old Flag.

Above all else, in gratitude to God and to all who have given so much, we now more than ever need a real, solid and lasting concept of one nation under God, truly united as one, in the defense of truth so that America might have a new birth of freedom. To accomplish this rebirth, we must pass the Red, White and Blue on to our younger generations with an strong admonition, perhaps best stated in the form of the words of the late President John F. Kennedy: 'Let the word go forth from this time and place to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans'.

Let every country know that whether it wishes us well or ill that we indeed are willing to pay the price, bear whatever hardship may be necessary, support any friend, and oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and success of the liberties we do enjoy. Listen closely...the trumpet call is summoning us once again....but not as a call to bear arms, though arms we do need, not as a call to battle, though we are so deeply embattled right now....but as a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, a struggle against all the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, the inhumane treatment of our fellow man, and yes even internal conflict itself.

So, let us pledge our loyalty to this great flag that expresses the will of a free people. Let us be obedient to everything it represents; our country's laws, the authority of our constitution, and a true recognition of the right of every human being to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Remember that as you recite the pledge allegiance to our flag we are honoring and saying thank you to every person who has suffered and died directly or indirectly for our country. They helped make our country great through their sacrifice. Let us preserve and defend the Stars and Stripes at home and abroad, and leave unsullied a priceless heritage for future generations of Americans. Now, more than ever before, may God Bless America!