

Viewpoints

From 'Declaration' to 'Consecration' for a magnificent independence

In the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, Pope Leo XIV writes about "safeguarding the human person in the time of artificial intelligence." Among his more intriguing points of analysis, and a topic of discussion for the upcoming Consistory of Cardinals at the end of this month, is found in the last chapter.

There the pope identifies a "culture of power" that is taking hold in our time "in which the availability of resources and the ability to dominate tend to dictate the agenda and criteria for decision making" (no. 188). Affected by the normalization of violence and war that follows, he warns, "peace no longer appears as a responsibility to be taken on, but as a fragile interval between conflicts" (no. 192).

Soon our American culture will celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence from the British culture of power regnant at the time, which sought, through a "history of repeated injuries and usurpations," to establish "an absolute Tyranny over these States."

To mark this anniversary, our bishops have decided to consecrate the United States of America to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That act seeks to initiate a different kind of revolution, in this hope of giving a different vision to our culture.

In our Christian perspective, as Pope Leo writes, we "view history in the light of the crucified and risen Lord" and "do not consider the present as a predetermined fate, but an opportunity for personal and collective conversion" (no. 210). That conversion

is inspired vividly by a declaration that Jesus made to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque a hundred years before the Colonies sought a new form of government of their own.

"Behold this Heart," Jesus said, "which has so loved (humans) that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, in order to testify its love."

As the saint came to see and know and tell the world, that Heart, poured out on the Cross for the salvation of all, expresses a culture of love and mercy more powerful than kingly rulers, political revolutions, and military arms.

In Margaret Mary's time and place, the culture of power given shape by King Louis XIV and his successors led to the fabled French Revolution at virtually the same time the colonial leaders across the pond acted. While the former uprising championed "égalité et liberté" in the pursuit of secularization, the Founding Fathers of the USA sought freedom and independ-

ence "with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence."

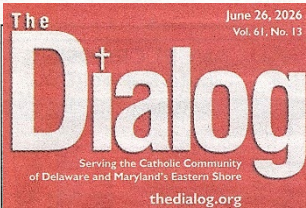
Now, 250 years later, the Church in the United States implores that same divine protection through an act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life" for all peoples and nations (John 14:6).

Consecration is a focused declaration of faith, in a country where, according to PEW research, the religiously unaffiliated

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FATHER
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now number close to three of every ten U.S. adults. For those affiliated with U.S. Catholicism, Archbishop Alexander Sample describes this event as an invitation to "reflect with gratitude on the blessings God has bestowed on our country" and as a challenge to "consider how we might foster truth, justice, and charity in American life."

Consecration is a reminder that human redemption is wrought for us not by us. The image of that Sacred Heart – depicted to St. Margaret Mary as on a throne of flames, encircled with a crown of thorns, and surmounted by a cross – discloses viscerally the lengths to which God would go to convince human beings of the depth of divine solicitude for them, a care and concern that precedes anything we do and accompanies all that we do.

Consecration is a protestation of peace, in and

for a nation that is a global super-power. That peace begins with each of us who are citizens. As Pope Leo writes in the encyclical (no. 212): "We all have our own areas for action, and it is precisely there — and nowhere else — that we must choose whether to fuel the mentality of force (even if only through indifference, cynicism, lies or hatred), or to preserve the

mindset of peace (with truth, moderation, closeness and care).

On July 4, 1776 our fledgling nation's leaders "pledge(d) to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor" in support of that Declaration of Independence. In July 2026 our consecration of this nation to the

Sacred Heart is a collective pledge of our faith in Him who creates and sustains our humanity "in all its grandeur" (*Magnifica Humanitas*).

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