P.S. to the NEWS
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BICENTENNIAL

By common consent over nearly two centuries, the day Americans celebrate as our most important national patriotic anniversary is the Fourth of July. The Bicentennial of our nation will be observed on July 4, 1976, and it is toward that target date that Bicentennial Commissions have been established nationally, in most states, and in hundreds of local communities and organizations.

The Bicentennial is not the anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution, or the ratification of the Bill of Rights, or the start or finish of the Revolutionary War, or the achievement of our national independence -- important as all those other events were. The Fourth of July is the anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

This basic document of our national existence is the most perfect orientation of man to his God and his government outside of Holy Scripture. It proclaims that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, ... [and] that to secure these rights, governments are instituted."

If men were created, they must necessarily have had a Creator; and so the Declaration of Independence is our national affirmation that God exists, and that each of us is equal in the sight of God and before the law. This, of course, does not mean that all men are born equal; it is just as self-evident that men are unequal in everything else except the sight of God and the law.

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The United States Constitution has had to suffer the fate of being repeatedly reinterpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court. As Charles Evans Hughes reminded us, our Constitution is whatever the Supreme Court Justices say it is. The Declaration of Independence has been spared this indignity. After 198 years, it still rings loud and clear with the unchanging voice of "self-evident" truth.

It was for the pursuit of these principles that our Founding Fathers pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. Most of the 56 signers did, indeed, sacrifice their lives or their fortunes, or both, for American independence. Five were captured and tortured by the British; nine died from wounds of war; 12 had their homes pillaged and destroyed; two lost their sons in battle; others were tracked down and persecuted for their patriotism. Most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence died broke: their homes had been looted, their fortunes spent or stolen because of the stand they took for American independence. We are their beneficiaries today.

The various Bicentennial Commissions functioning throughout the country have missed the point of what the Bicentennial is all about. It is the anniversary of the Declaration of the philosophical credo of our Republic -- and this is precisely what we need to be reminded of today.

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