



One of the great symbols of the United States is the Statue of Liberty, which has served as a beacon of hope for generations of immigrants who have come to these shores seeking a better life and longing to contribute their gifts. She is, in many ways, an icon of the American promise.

We know her torch, raised high as a symbol of hope and freedom. We must also look below to her feet, where the chains of injustice, though broken, are still visible. The statue itself reveals the tension. Our nation holds a great promise, one that has not been fully realized.

The Paulist Fathers, the first community of Catholic priests founded in the United States, join in commemorating the 250th anniversary of our nation's independence. As a diverse community of priests—ourselves immigrants or descendants of immigrants—we neither offer easy congratulations nor surrender to despair. We propose something that is more demanding and more hopeful: an invitation to walk forward together, honestly and humbly, carrying the same light that Lady Liberty holds.

We celebrate the accomplishments and noble aspirations of our nation. And we call on all people to acknowledge our shared responsibility for confronting both the past and present wounds to human dignity—divisive rhetoric, racial injustice, the demonization of immigrants, and the lasting toll of war. May we resolve to make amends for the ways in which we have failed to fulfill our founding ideals of freedom, liberty, and justice for all.

Pope Leo XIV reminds us, “the moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to accompany, protect and love those lives that are most fragile.” As Catholic priests rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we take those words to heart. As we honor this anniversary, we walk with those most vulnerable among us and recommit ourselves to protecting the life and dignity of every human person.

The torch is worth carrying. The chains are worth naming. We pray that we as a nation, at two-hundred fifty years young, have the courage to hold both. May God bless America.



Very Rev. René Constanza, CSP
President, Paulist Fathers