

Focus on Religious Freedom

"Freedom is a gift and a personal responsibility. " - Pope Francis

July 4, 1776 - A Free Nation is Born

The First Great Awakening, a religious revival begun in the 1740s, infused the American colonists with a zeal for independence in religious practice as well as government, thus reinforcing the principle of freedom from religious persecution and for religious freedom, that brought the first settlers to America.

After almost a year of trying to resolve their differences with Britain concerning many grievances, together with taxation without representation (the colonists had no say in the decisions of the English Parliament even though they were English citizens), in May 1776, the 13 colonies sent delegates to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. After nearly two months of prayer, discussion and debate, these "Founders" approved the **Declaration of Independence**, drafted by Thomas Jefferson.

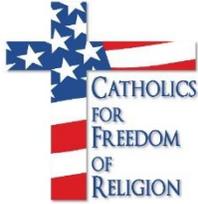
"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

"Religious thinking, religious questioning and religious faith permeated the Revolution and the Founding," wrote world history author, H. McDougal. "The American cause was profoundly religious for Protestants and Deists alike because both identified America's future with a Providential (God) design." ⁽¹⁾

"Samuel Adams was the archetype of the religiously passionate American founder ... an apostle of liberty ... a man of deep religious conviction whose confidence, zeal, and endurance in the struggle for freedom was grounded in belief that an intervening God was on his side," said history professor S. Still. ⁽²⁾

(The Faith of Our Fathers, by Alf Mapp(1)(2); str.org; lehrminstitute.org; hnp.org)

"We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom alone men ought to be obedient. He reigns in Heaven, and with a propitious eye holds his subjects assuming that freedom of thought and dignity of self-direction which He bestowed on them. From the rising to the setting of the sun, may His kingdom come!" - Samuel Adams, Founding Father



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