



# Fr Ben's Weekly Reflection

*14th Sunday Ordinary Time*

Jul 5, 2026

## **The Soul Of The World**

There is a letter written in the 100s AD when Christianity was still new. It's written as an "explanation" or "defense" of Christianity to a Roman governor or possibly another government official. The key passage points out that Christians are not different: they do not have a special language, they do not live in cities of their own, they do not live eccentric lives. The author of the letter, Diognetus, states, "They live in their own countries, but only as sojourners. They participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is a foreign country... They live on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven."

As we celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Independence Day this weekend and our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a nation, these ideas should still be true today. We can be proud to be Americans, but being in America is not our ultimate destiny. As Baptized Christians, our true citizenship is in Heaven and we are merely travelers here on earth for however long God has given us.

The letter from Diognetus goes further. It highlights that yes, Christians live everywhere and are "normal" in appearance, but they are different in action. Roman society was pagan and "loose" on morals. The author notes Christians did not go to the pagan temples, they did not practice "exposure" (leaving unwanted babies to the elements), or divorce and "open relationships. They follow the laws and go above and beyond them. They are poor, but share freely with each other of their personal goods and are happy about it. They suffer insult, but they return a blessing instead. They are sometimes persecuted and hated, but no one can explain why.

As Christians, we recognize that our citizenship is in Heaven and God's law is our law. We live and are part of society, but we should not be like society. America is a unique nation in allowing religious freedom. But often, we forsake our Heavenly citizenship for our temporary citizenship. Being a Catholic Christian means living by God's ideals. Our morals are not shaped by opinion polls or our political affiliation.

The letter from Diognetus refers to Christians as being like the "soul" of the world in how they direct society toward Heaven by their lives. One of the greatest challenges facing American Catholics today is discerning which voice speaks first in our minds: our political convictions or our Catholic Faith. Certainly, there are debates about what charity, love of neighbor, morality, justice, and virtue mean in society. The Church has had a lot to say about social issues, but what are our ears attuned to hear? Worldly language and morals, or our Christian morals and language?

So yes, let us celebrate our country on this Independence Day weekend. But let us also ask on a personal level "Am I as a Catholic Christian living just like everyone else or am I living as a Citizen of Heaven"?