

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

About Greatness

BY FATHER JIM

During a recent apostolic journey to Spain, Pope Leo XIV addressed the Spanish Parliament. Much like the United States Congress, the *Cortes Generales* is comprised of two chambers: a Senate and a House of Delegates. But unlike our legislative branch of government, which is dominated by two political parties, the Spanish system currently includes at least eleven different parties. Each one has an agenda and a claim on some seats in parliament. Under both systems, some degree of compromise is required to pass budgets and legislation that serve the common good.

In this atmosphere of concession, cooperation, and accommodation, the Holy Father did not endorse a political party. He did not preach a political platform. He did not lecture members of parliament about the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church and how they should be codified by law. Instead, Pope Leo talked with Spanish leaders about broad but essential themes related to freedom, human dignity, and the common good. He also talked about greatness.

Quoting from Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) and his classic novel, *Don Quixote*, the pope declared that "freedom...is one of the most precious gifts that heaven has bestowed upon [humanity]." But Pope Leo did not propose a gospel of unchecked greed, desire, and self-interest. He was referring to an understanding of freedom that is tempered by justice, self-restraint, and concern for the welfare of others. He was reminding the world of a philosophical concept known as "ordered liberty."

The Holy Father continued by praising the country's longstanding commitment to human dignity: "Spain has known how to view the human being as more than just a cog in the social, economic, or political order. It has recognized the human being as a creature open to truth, endowed with freedom, and driven by a thirst for eternity that no temporal reality can quench." In this way, the pope reminded his audience that every person is a child of God the Father who possesses an innate dignity that "takes precedence over all utility" and must be protected by any legitimate government.

Pope Leo then reminded his audience that the blessings of liberty and respect for human dignity are passed from generation to generation by a "legal and moral consciousness" that sees rights and duties as connected; that aims beyond self-interest toward just, true, and shared goals. Pope Leo said: "That aspiration continues to resonate now: that dignity, justice, and the common good should be the measure of social relations at both the national and international levels." In this way, what we want as individuals should be balanced with what we need as a community of brothers and sisters.

Finally, Pope Leo XIV spoke about it takes for a nation to be truly exceptional. He said: "The moral greatness of a nation is manifested, above all, in its capacity to accompany, protect, and love those lives that are most fragile." This is the greatness that remembers the poor, cares for the sick, welcomes the stranger, and defends the lives of the unborn and the elderly. This is the greatness that lives the Gospel and shares God's love with every single person. This is the greatness to which we should all aspire. This is the greatness for which we should all pray -- now more than ever. Amen.

Reverend James M. Achadinha, Pastor
Catholic Community of Gloucester & Rockport
Contact: frjim@ccgrounline.com