

ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER  
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#### OUR MISSION

The Office of Evangelization & Catechesis provides support, training and resources to catechists, evangelists, pastors and directors of religious education in order to help them fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and teach the Catholic faith in complete fidelity to the *Magisterium* under the direction of the Archbishop.

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“freedom” in ways that contradict “the laws of Nature’s God,” our atheocratic government now deems itself competent to rewrite the God-given definitions of marriage and the family.

These are sobering thoughts as our nation celebrates the anniversary of its independence on July 4, 1776. Yet there is a way forward.

We need to restore a government based on theism and natural law. We need to restore the original integral relationship between the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Until recently in our history, this connection was taken for granted. If the Constitution was the letter of the law, the Declaration was regarded as the spirit.

In 1841, defending African men on trial for rebelling against slavetraders who had abducted them, John Quincy Adams said: “In the Declaration of Independence, the Laws of Nature are announced and appealed to as identical with the laws of Nature’s God—and as the foundation of all obligatory human laws.” The Supreme Court’s ruling in the case, made famous by the Steven Spielberg film, *Amistad*, was an important milestone in the abolition of slavery.

America’s future depends today, as it always has, on the choices that faithful citizens will make. God—not government—is the only sure guarantee of human rights and the blessings of our liberty. We need to live as if we believe that. For only a people who believe these truths to be self-evident can build a society worthy of men and women created by God.

*This article was published on First Things.*

### BEGINNINGS RCIA Training

With the North American Forum on the Catechumenate.

August 4-6

St. Thomas More

8035 S. Quebec St., Centennial

**FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE**

Call 303-715-3260

For more information about

North American Forum go to [www.naforum.org](http://www.naforum.org)

### FOR ALL CATECHISTS

2011 CATECHETICAL CONGRESS

“DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME”

Drawing from this year’s Catechetical Sunday theme, we invite you to this training for new or seasoned catechists. Great speakers will give you tools and resources, and help you sharpen your skills.

Saturday, August 27

Renaissance hotel (3801 Quebec St., Denver)

*Find Registration form attached*

# Finest Wheat

A newsletter for the New Evangelization  
July 2011

## Inside:

- Confirmation and the Economy of Salvation
- America’s Atheocracy
- Formation Opportunities during the Summer

### Pope Benedict’s prayer intentions for July 2011



**General intention:** “That Christians may contribute to alleviating the material and spiritual suffering of AIDS patients, especially in the poorest countries.”

**Missionary intention:** “For the religious who work in mission territories, that they may be witnesses of the joy of the Gospel and living signs of the love of Christ.”

*We encourage you to include these intentions in the prayers of the faithful.*

## Confirmation and the Economy of Salvation

James Cavanagh, Metro Area Director



"For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." – Ephesians 1:9-10

"He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world . . . and become partakers of the divine nature." – 1 Peter 1:4

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life." (Catechism, 1)

"The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God." (Vatican Council II; The Church in the Modern World, 19)

God has a plan. From the beginning, God's plan was that every man, woman and child would know him, love him and enjoy him forever. It was for this reason that God created the universe. "Creation" the Catechism says "is the foundation of 'all God's saving plans' that culminates in Christ" (Catechism, 280). Creation points to God, reflecting His beauty and goodness. As the Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork!" (Psalm 19:1). The Church Fathers called creation the first sacrament because through it God communicates His goodness and love. "The world was made for the glory of God" (Catechism 293). Through creation we receive the first hints of God's goodness, love and beauty.

Pondering the works of creation prompts us to ask those questions that people of all times have asked: "Where did we come from?" "Where are we going?" "Is there life after death?" "What does it all mean?" "Creation" the Catechism says, "is the first and universal witness to God's all-powerful love" (Catechism 288). The story of creation (Genesis 1-3) is of paramount importance for it speaks of the origin and destiny of all that is. Inspired by God, the ancient writers bear witness to the goodness of creation and the dignity of man. The first three chapters of Genesis also reveal the origin of sin and the reality of evil. But the story of creation and the fall also contains the seed of hope and the promise of salvation. Despite man's rejection of God, God, in his mercy, did not reject man.

Sacred Scripture is a record of God's dealings with fallen humanity through historical events. Gradually, over time, God revealed his "plan of loving goodness" (Catechism, 51) by establishing various covenants with the human race. A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties involving mutual commitments and assurances. A visible sign always accompanies a covenant. The first covenant with the human race, represented by our first parents, is signified by the Sabbath, a sign of God's unshakeable

faithfulness. When the first covenant was broken by sin, the unity of the human race was shattered. Undeterred, God began to restore that unity and save humanity by establishing his covenant with a family: the family of Noah and through him "with every living creature" (Gen. 9:12). The sign of this covenant is the rainbow. Still, sin reigned throughout the world, causing division and strife among the nations. God then chose Abraham, our father in faith, to reunite the human family. "In order to gather together scattered humanity, God called Abram from his country" (Catechism 59; Gen. 12:1). To Abraham and his descendants God established an "everlasting covenant" (Gen. 17:7), signified by the land of Canaan and descendants numerous as the stars of heaven. Abraham confirmed his part of the covenant through circumcision, which would serve as a perpetual sign of God's promises to all generations. Through Jacob, Moses and David, God established successive covenants, reaffirming the promises made to Abraham and expanding the circle of fellowship to include all those he had chosen to be part of his holy family. Finally, in the fullness of time, God sent his own beloved Son to establish "the new and everlasting covenant" with all mankind. Through Christ, the New Adam, God restored the communion lost through sin. Christ established the Church, the "universal sacrament of salvation" to be the sign and instrument of unity between God and man, and men with each other. The Church, the Catechism tells us, "is the visible plan of God's love for humanity, because God desires that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit." (Catechism, 776)

Confirmation, then, is an integral part of God's loving plan of salvation. Through it, our place in God's one, holy family is ratified, strengthened, confirmed. As a sacrament, it is a visible sign of the new covenant, which roots us more deeply in 'divine filiation', unites us more firmly to Christ and renders our bond with the Church more perfect. (Catechism, 1303).



Pentecost by Jean Restout II

## America's Atheocracy

James D. Conley, S.T.L., Auxiliary Bishop of Denver.

G. K. Chesterton said famously that America is "a nation with the soul of a church." And he believed the Declaration of Independence formed the substance of our national soul.

But as we celebrate this Fourth of July, we need to recognize that some of the deepest problems in our public life can be traced to our collective neglect of America's great founding document.

The Declaration establishes our common self-identity as Americans. It tells us that we are one nation under God, a people who believe that all men and women have God-given rights. It tells us that government exists for no other purpose than to defend and promote these rights. All this we find in the Declaration's preamble, which still has the power to stir us.

America's founders never intended to establish a religious government, let alone a theocracy. In fact, just the opposite. They specifically disallowed any state-sanctioned religion. Yet the government they did establish was founded on theistic, if not explicitly Christian, principles.

Many observers have identified a deep Christian influence in America's founding documents—including such luminaries as Chesterton, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jacques Maritain, John Courtney Murray, Martin Luther King Jr., and Blessed John Paul II.

Others see more the hand of the Enlightenment's philosophical Deism at work.

Whatever its precise Christian pedigree, it cannot be denied that our government was founded upon a belief that human rights come from God, not governments, and that the world is in the hands of what the Declaration called "Nature's God" and "the Supreme Judge of the World."

It is true: the Constitution that America's founders would later draft makes no mention of God. It is also true that this Constitution denies full rights to slaves and women.

But the Declaration's belief in the divine origin of the human person is everywhere presumed. And throughout American history, this belief has served as a goad to the conscience, inspiring reforms and renewal in almost every generation. It has ensured that injustice, cowardice, and political expediency do not have to have the final word in our public affairs.

The Constitution and Declaration together form the "great wells of democracy" that express "the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage," King wrote in his Letter from the Birmingham Jail.

America's founders also shared a belief that religion mattered—not only for the private welfare of individuals but also for the commonweal. Charles Carroll, the Declaration's only Catholic signatory, put

it succinctly in a letter to James McHenry, a signer of the Constitution:

"Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; they therefore who are decrying the Christian religion, whose morality is so sublime & pure . . . are undermining the solid foundation of morals, the best security for the duration of free governments."

Unfortunately, in our day, those "decrying the Christian religion" have seized the captain's seat in America—in the academy, the media, the government and courts. The result is a kind of publicly enforced religious indifferentism, or what recent Popes have called "practical atheism." The Constitution insists that no religious test shall ever be required for public office. But our society, in effect, now imposes an "irreligious test." To take part in civic life, Americans must first agree to think and act as if they have no religious convictions or motivations.

America today is becoming what I call an atheocracy—a society that is actively hostile to religious faith and religious believers.

An atheocracy is a dangerous place, both morally and spiritually. Cut off from the religious moorings expressed in the Declaration, we risk becoming a nation without a soul, a people with no common purpose apart from material pursuits. Worse, as Chesterton well understood, without belief in a Creator, our democracy has no compelling reason for defending human rights:

"The Declaration of Independence dogmatically bases all rights on the fact that God created all men equal. . . . There is no basis for democracy except in a dogma about the divine origin of man. . . . Every other basis is a sort of sentimental confusion . . . always vain for the vital purpose of constraining the tyrant."

Our atheocracy has rejected what Chesterton called the dogmatic basis of American identity and liberties. An atheocracy has no ultimate truths to guide it and no inviolable ethical principles by which to direct political activity. Hence, it has no foundation upon which to establish justice, secure true freedom or to constrain tyrants.

We see the consequences of this atheocratic mindset everywhere. We see it most clearly in the case of legalized abortion. Denying the divine origins of the human person, our government has withdrawn the law's protection from unborn children in the womb—the most absolutely innocent and defenseless members of our human family.

The legal extermination of the unborn is only the most egregious offense against God's law. In fact, there is apparently no area of life over which our atheocratic government does not feel omniscient—that government knows best.

This is dramatically clear in the movement to establish homosexual unions as an alternative kind of family. Under pressure from powerful special interests who manipulate the language of "rights" and