

## **Independence Day and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

In Luke 4:18-19 (that we have just read), we have the manifesto of Jesus' public ministry. In verse 21, there seems to be a sense of urgency in his approach when he says, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

August 15 is very significant for the people of India. On this day, two historic events are observed and celebrated – India's Independence and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While the first one is symbolic of political liberation, the second one is complete liberation (at the end of our earthly journey) from anything that binds us. As both these events are celebrated, all the citizens rejoice and seek God's blessings on the country, its rulers and people.

As we usher in the 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, let us first of all remember the heroic sacrifices of our freedom fighters. They had a dream for India. Their ultimate aim was to see India standing on its own and striving to attain its pristine glory.

It is matter of great pride that India stood by democracy, which is the best form of governance that makes room for people's participation in taking decisions and framing policies meant for quality enhancement of citizenship. The members of the Constituent Assembly, under the wise leadership of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, considering the complex diversity and attempting to safeguard the unity, asserted firmly to maintain the secular fabric of the country so that all people, irrespective of caste and class, creed and religion, could live in peace and harmony.

Our expectations are high to see a stronger and a prosperous India, wherein all people will continue to enjoy freedom— freedom of expression and of religion, equality of opportunities for all as enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

Though we look ahead confidently with optimism, the signs of our times are very much disturbing and depressing. On the political front, we experience much turmoil and upheavals. Violence and crime are the order of the day. Justice is being denied to innocent victims. The gap between the rich and the poor is sadly widening ever more, in spite of several welfare schemes. The economic scenario is very alarming and afflicting the common man. The prices of essential commodities are sky-rocketing, thus depriving the common man/woman of one square meal a day. Social unrest is on the increase. The underprivileged sections of people are the targets of the powerful. The law enforcement authorities seem helpless to put an end to atrocities, assaults, crimes, murders, gang-rapes, human trafficking, drug-peddling and scams. They fail to ensure peaceful and fraternal living.

### **What could be the cause of this malady?**

We may have dreamed about freedom without thinking that great responsibility will follow. Freedom you have, but maybe you have not fulfilled the responsibility. Hence, sadness lingers around you.

Independence Day is an occasion for each one to reflect and see what has been “my contribution towards my country.” It is easy to push the blame on a few and evade our own responsibility. It was in his inaugural address that John F. Kennedy spoke his famous words, "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." It was a call to action for the public to do what is right for the greater good.

I am a citizen of this country, and by virtue of this, I enjoy certain benefits. The Constitution, while ensuring you have certain rights, also reminds you of your duties. Responsibility and freedom go together. If you don't want to take the responsibility, you can't have freedom either.

Madame Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, always used to carry two bags in her hand. Whether going for a walk or travelling by train, those two bags were always in her hands. She would take something from those bags and throw it outside the train. People would ask, “Why do you do this?” She would say, “This has been my whole life's habit. These are seasonal flower seeds. I may not come back this route again, but that does not matter. When the season comes and the flowers blossom, thousands of people who travel on this railway line will see those flowers, those colours. They will not know me. That does not matter. One thing is certain; I am making a few people happy somewhere. That much I know. It does not matter whether they know it or not. What matters is that I have been doing something which will make somebody happy. Some children may come and pluck a few flowers and go home. Some lovers may come and make garlands for each other. And without their knowing, I will be part of their love. And I will be part of the joy of children. And I will be part of those who will be simply passing by the path, seeing the beautiful flowers.”

Mahatma Gandhi believed that real Swaraj would come “not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused.”

**No more being just observers. Let us get actively involved.**

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. As a citizen of India, what is my dream for my country?
2. Can I identify one or two areas that need immediate attention and change?
3. In what way can I contribute to this change?
4. What role can our parish SCCs play at the local level in bringing positive change in the present scenario?

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