

## ***Land of the free and home of the brave...***

*This past July 4th, I was able to watch the beautiful display of fireworks on the East River. It was a great night as we celebrated the two hundredth fortieth anniversary of our independence as a nation. After all, America is something to celebrate and most of us feel especially patriotic on the Fourth of July.*

*But then, just three days later, came a different type of "fireworks" not in New York City but in Dallas, Texas. Five police officers were brutally gunned down at the conclusion of a rally-a terrible tragedy for everyone. Of course, violence is not the answer.*

*In this regard, we might think of our Blessed Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane when He was falsely accused and arrested. In His defense, Saint Peter took up a sword and began to swing it around violently. Jesus said, "Those who take the sword perish by it!" How true and how prophetic!*

*Police officers have a job to do and we all know that it is not an easy one. They have to enforce the laws. Without the enforcement of law, we would have anarchy and chaos in our city and our land. Now, there has been much criticism of the police in the last few weeks. Are there bad police officers? Of course! There are also bad doctors, lawyers, teachers, and even priests sad to say! But we can assert that the majority of police are indeed good. Certainly most of them are trying to perform their job in an extraordinarily difficult times in our current society.*

*Speaking generally, we could assert that people vested with authority today are looked upon with disdain and suspicion by some. Authority is given to the police to uphold and up build the common good and to protect our lives and safety. We should respect our police because of the great service they perform. Talking to a friend of mine who is a police officer recently, he told me, "You can't imagine how difficult it is emotionally in the "heat of the moment" when confronting a suspect." That is something I never thought about.*

*In the last few days when there has been so much violence all across the country, we must have essential faith in our democracy. The United States is the "land of the brave." Thank God for the freedoms we enjoy here-freedom to worship God, freedom of speech, freedom from want and finally, freedom from fear.*

*This last freedom gives us the right as Americans to feel safe and secure in our homes and neighborhoods. Our law enforcement officials contribute in no small way to our security and peace in our communities.*

*The United States will remain the land of the free as long as it continues to be "the home of the brave." We certainly should be thankful not only to our police and*

*firefighters, but also to those who serve in the military and other organizations. Bravely, these men and women "put their lives on the line" so that we might enjoy peace and a secure existence.*

*So instead of criticizing, let us thank those who serve us at such a great cost! My prayer during this hot and long summer is that the violence will end with a prayerful recognition by all parties that life is fragile and must be handled with care...*

*Sincerely in Christ,*

*Fr. Jerome*