

July, 2006

Rev. Kevin Shanley, O.Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd., Darien, IL
(630) 969-4141 60561-5305

Life is Worth Giving

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS VITAL TO FREEDOM

Virtually every American schoolchild knows that George Washington of Virginia is "The Father of Our Country." He is essentially "the" Founding Father. In essence he was, without a doubt, a dedicated patriot, skillful general, and a gifted leader who guided our fledging and struggling nation through the dark and difficult period of our revolution against the forces of England. He also served two excellent terms as our first president and established many guidelines for our future presidents. He is regarded by many as "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

But as the subtitle to this remarkable study by Janice T. Connell, "The Spiritual Journey of George Washington," reminds us that he was also a deeply spiritual man who mainly relied on God, especially in times of great stress and danger. He remained faithful to his God all the days of his life, and encouraged his fellow Americans to do this also. God and prayer were very much a part of his everyday living.

Baptized in the Anglican (Episcopalian) Faith, Washington not only followed religiously his own Faith but respected the religious traditions of others such as the Baptists, Jews and Catholics and called upon others to respect them, too.



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(WASHINGTON) / 2

Throughout his life, Washington's religious beliefs influenced his life as a young surveyor on the American Frontier, and as a Virginia milita officer in the French^e and Indian War. And when he took command of the ragtale American Army in Cambridge, Mass., in 1775, it took a great act of faith to believe that they could possibly defeat England which was then the most powerful nation in the world.

And when defeat seemed almost inevitable for the half-starved and ill-clad Continental Army at Valley Forge, Pa., in the winter of 1777, Washington once again turned to God in prayer as he knelt in the snow to implore the blessings and providence of God.

His reliance on God remained a significant part of his life, too, during the difficult times of his presidency.

This unusual book also contains the entire text of the "Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation." These rules, learned at an early age, guided Washington throughout his life and were based to some extent on acceptable Christian principles.

Also part of this book is a collection of prayers entitled "Daily Sacrifice," written by Washington himself and recited by him each morning and evening of the week.

And according to the author, Washington was a wise friend to more diverse Americans than any other man of his time.



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(Washington)/ 3

This is especially true of his relationship with the Catholic Carroll Family of the Maryland Colony. Charles Carroll, who signed the Declaration of Independence and outlived all the others who signed in 1776, was a strong supporter of Washington and the Continental Army even with his own personal funds. His cousin, Fr. John Carroll, was also a friend of Washington and the American Revolutionary cause. He later became the first bishop of the Catholic Church in the new United States of America in the Diocese of Baltimore, MD. Bishop Carroll was also influential in beginning the custom of public prayer for the president and the nation.

Washington sincerely believed that his path in life was outlined in the message of the Gospel. His mission was primarily to become a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. Washington's personal sense of freedom and self-worth rested in his own relationship with God.

The issue of slavery was one that bothered Washington from a religious point of view, and he personally opposed it in politics. His slaves at Mount Vernon were treated fairly, and no one was permitted to treat them unjustly. He also forbid any slave family to be broken up by the selling of some members to other plantations. He also arranged in his will that his slaves would eventually be given their freedom.

-more-



Fr. Kevin Shanley, O. Carm.
8433 Bailey Rd
Darien IL 60561-5305

(WASHINGTON)/ 4

In his final moments here on earth, according to some sources, the only clergyman available was the Rev. Neale, a Jesuit priest from the Maryland Province, who gave Washington the last rites.

Washington's life, especially his spirituality, has much to teach America and other nations about the place of God in a country's outlook and existence. It is the hallmark of a great nation that it cherishes its relationship to God, and relies on eternal truth for its laws.

As the famous Abigail Adams, the wife of another Founding Father John Adams, said of George Washington, "Simple truth is his best, his greatest eulogy. She alone can render his fame immortal."