



*Rediscover 1776*

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# The Gavel



HOW IT ALL BEGAN,      By Dominique Shema, Founder

Rediscover 1776 began on February 22nd, 2021 - Washington's birthday. We are a group of about a dozen adults, mostly from the parish, who meet weekly for lively discussions about American history, always from a Catholic perspective.

The name, 'Rediscover 1776' reflects the need for our country to get back to its roots. To save the country, we have to know what it was meant to be, and that means going back to the beginning. The American Revolution has been my favorite thing in the world since I was very small and first read Patrick Henry's 'Liberty or Death' speech. Later, I was disappointed to find the country didn't reflect those values anymore, so I was looking for ways to help. Four years ago, beginning with the Federalist Papers, I began a self-imposed reading course about the ideas that formed America. I wasn't sure what for, but I knew I needed to do it.

In 2019, I started coming to Christ the King, and heard Fr. Lockwood's prayer intentions 'that the country find itself again and we rediscover our founding documents'. Later, in one of Rush Limbaugh's last shows, he said we needed to 'evangelize the Constitution', and it all clicked. I knew what I could do: start a group where we relearn our history, make it fun and accessible, and we become those little sparks of liberty that create the brushfires Samuel Adams talked about.

A typical meeting is discussion based. Sometimes, for a change of pace, a member will give a special presentation. We prioritize reading the Founders in their own words, because that's the best way to know what they were about. There is a short reading every week, but it's always voluntary. Not everyone has time and the goal is to make the group as accessible as possible.

So far we've covered the major founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution and Bill of Rights - and what the Founders thought of them. We tend to go slow, so we can be thorough.

Up next is the main attraction: the history of the American Revolution!

[Join us in praying the St. Michael Prayer for the defeat of the evil forces threatening our country:](#)

[Sr. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray. And do thou, Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls, Amen](#)

## Our Founding Fathers

It's important that we remember what our Founding Father gave up for us.

A profound line in the Declaration of Independence that says, "we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

There were 56 men who signed the document declaring independence from Great Britain, knowing what might happen to them as they did so. This was considered an act of treason – the punishment, hanging. And yet, they signed it.

Five signers were captured and tortured by the British. They died. Twelve had their homes burned.. Nine died in the war.

Carter Braxton, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships taken by the British. He died in rags.

Thomas McKean was hounded by the British and forced to move his family constantly. He kept them in hiding while he served in Congress. His possessions taken, he ended in poverty.

Vandals or soldiers looted eight signers' homes. Thomas Nelson Jr.'s home was occupied as headquarters for British soldiers. Nelson urged George Washington to order his men to fire on his home, which was destroyed. Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his properties stolen and his wife jailed, where she died several months later.

John Hart's wife died in October 1776. Just two months later, the British ravaged the area while Washington's troops retreated across New Jersey. The 13 Hart children fled. Hart lived in the forest for more than a year. When he returned to his damaged home, he began to suffer from kidney stones. He died in debt in 1779.

These men were educated and wealthy, not naïve. They had security. They valued liberty more.

They pledged, "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance of divine providence, we humbly pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Knowing when they signed the Declaration of Independence, they risked everything, they signed.

And freedom was born.

## The Fourth Amendment, Simple, Direct

"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the person or things to be seized."

The Fourth Amendment is simple and direct. Its purpose is to protect American citizens from government search and seizure of their persons or property without a credible and specific reason based on evidence truthfully presented before an impartial judge who issues a search warrant.

In other words, we don't have to let someone representing any government agency enter our home, search our automobile or stop and frisk us unless there's a probable cause or a search warrant is shown to us.

That's pretty simple, but the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent passage of the Patriot Act made things a lot less simple. Think about the last time you flew somewhere and went through a TSA check at the airport where they required you to go through an electronic screening device and a TSA agent physically frisked you without asking your permission or showing you a search warrant. Does the government have the right to listen to our phone calls, monitor and search our activities on our computers or keep track of what we buy with our credit cards? Does our security against terrorists take precedent over our security against an intrusive government?

What you believe about this issue is up to you, and every citizen should be informed on our Fourth Amendment rights and the limits of the government, but there is no doubt that the Fourth Amendment represents a fundamentally important right of all American citizens.

Starting October 25th, the history of the American Revolution, like you've never heard it before. We'll cover everything from the founding of the colonies, the ten years of growing tensions with Great Britain, and the war itself up through its conclusion with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. All in great glorious detail, complete with eyewitness histories, and a weekly reading featuring an influential piece that would have been heard or read at the time. Meet the people, relive the events, and hear the ideas that led to the greatest country in history!



## The Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance so familiar to us today was penned by Francis Bellamy, a minister and Christian author, to promote the sale of U.S. flags to public schools. In 1892, the editor of *The Youth's Companion* magazine, James Upham, had the idea of pairing the flag sales with the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus reaching the Americas to boost sales. Bellamy's pledge was published in the September 8, 1892 issue of the magazine. "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." The pledge was first used in public schools on Columbus Day, October 12, 1892, as was declared President Benjamin Harrison.

Several changes were made to the original Pledge over the years, and in 1948, Louis Bowman, chaplain for the Illinois Society of The Sons of the American Revolution, suggested adding the words "under God." In 1951, the New York Assembly of the Knights of Columbus began adding the phrase to the Pledge of Allegiance, and in 1952 the Supreme Council adopted a resolution to make the change nationwide for Knights of Columbus Councils.

In February 1954, a Presbyterian pastor, George MacPherson Docherty, delivered a sermon based on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address arguing that something was missing from the Pledge of Allegiance, as the might of the country lay not in her armies but in her spirit and higher purpose. "...that which was missing was the characteristic and definitive factor" of American life. The words "under God" set the United States apart from other nations. President Eisenhower was enthusiastic and the next day acted on Docherty's suggestion. Congress passed the needed legislation and the words officially became part of the pledge June 14, 1954, Flag Day.



James Madison is credited with drafting the text of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. The U.S. Senate website, [Senate.gov](http://Senate.gov), states that the U.S. Constitution, operative since 1789, is the longest-surviving written charter of government. "Its first three words, 'WE THE PEOPLE,' affirm that the government of the United States exists to serve its citizens."

The Constitution has been in force for 232 years, and its longevity is due to its framers - Madison, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington—successfully separated and balanced government powers to safeguard the interests of American citizens. It is a concise statement of national principles and has evolved over the centuries to meet changing needs. It has been amended 27 times, the first 10 known as the Bill of Rights.

## Test Your Knowledge

1. Name 5 Founding Fathers.
2. One signer of the Declaration of Independence was Catholic. Who was he?
3. We all know about the Bill of Rights. Do you know where the "rights" originated?
4. What are three civil liberties in the Bill of Rights?
5. In December 1776, Thomas Paine wrote something that is still applicable today, perhaps even more so. What was the name of the document? The first sentence is often quoted during challenging times.

Answers will be posted in the next issue. Stay tuned.

### Four week schedule:

October 25th - Preliminaries #1: the founding of the colonies  
November 1st - no meeting - All Saints' Day  
November 8th - Preliminaries #2: French and Indian War, war debt, and navigation laws  
November 15th - Colonial Troubles: The Stamp Act (1765)

\*dates and topics subject to change

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