

Danville News Column
Robert John Andrews
"One Nation Under God"
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For conservative theological reasons I've never bothered much with the National Day of Prayer designated by Congress for the first Thursday in May so "we will turn to God in prayer and meditation." Sources report how Bill Clinton didn't stage any National Day of Prayer events, while Reagan and George H. Bush hosted special National Day of Prayer events only once in each of their tenures. During George W. Bush's presidency this day became popular.

For what reasons does government want us to turn to God for prayer and meditation? Do we really need Pelosi or McConnell instructing us when to pray or why? That's copyright infringement! That's union busting. That's my job. Correction: that's our job. That's why you've not seen me on the Courthouse steps. I'll stand on the Courthouse steps for Domestic Violence Vigils. Or to get a dog license. Attribute it to being fussy about reminding myself how the God I worship knows no national boundaries and cannot be claimed by any nation or cause.

When our government avoids meddling in church matters, that's when we breathe easy. Religion is stronger, healthier, and safer whenever government keeps hands off. Check out Europe and their state supported churches. Relics and museums mostly. Or check out Tehran.

To be fair, let's equally avoid inviting us clergy-types to control the government. As much as I'd enjoy issuing authoritative fatwas, I'm pretty sure you'd rather we clergy-types didn't start defining what alone is lawful and telling you what is permissible and impermissible. We have a Constitution, thank you very much. Please, let's not replace it with either Koran or Bible.

What's exciting about our America? You can find it all summed up by the World Cup. Forgive me my soccer references (though this really isn't about soccer). Let's play a guessing game. Here's a sampling of some team rosters from the World Cup. Name the nation based upon the names of the players.

Gianluigi Buffon. Morgan De Sanctis. Federico Marchetti.
Salvatore Bocchetti.. Leonardo Bonucci. Fabio Cannavaro.
Could it be Italy?

Avraam Papadopoulos. Sokratis Papastathopoulos. Giourkas
Seitaridis. Nikos Spyropoulos. Eureka, it's Greece.

Giovanni Van Bronckhorst. Gregory Van Der Wiel. Nigel De
Jong. Demy De Zeeuw. You win a tulip. Netherlands

Yeom Ki-Hun. Ahn Jung-Hwan. Park Chu-Young. Lee Dong-
Gook. Lee Seung-Yeoul. Hello, South Korea.

Ricardo Canales. Donis Escobar. Noel Valladares. Victor
Bernárdez. Osman Chávez. Yes, it just might be my friends
from Honduras

Aaron Lennon. James Milner. Shaun Wright-Phillips. Peter
Crouch. Jermain Defoe. Cheers, it's England.

Now try this last one. Brad Guzan. Marcus Hahnemann.
Tim Howard. Carlos Bocanegra. Jonathan Bornstein. Steve
Cherundolo. Maurice Edu. Oguchi Onyewu. DaMarcus
Beasley. Tougher to place? It should be. It is the good
old USA! We enjoy our variety and relish our cultural
distinctions, but first and foremost we play for America.

Get it? Some call us a melting pot. We're something more
flavorful. More a stew, a gumbo. These individual
ingredients plopp into the pot to cook up an entirely new
dish. More of a gestalt.

We're not Scottish-Americans, Mexican-Americans, African-
Americans, or Polish-Americans. Neither are we Christian-
Americans nor Muslim-Americans. We're a new breed, a new
race. We're Americans. "We're a new nationality," Ben
Franklin said in the musical 1776. "We require a new
nation." 'Out of Many, One' proclaims our national seal:
E Pluribus Unum. July 4th means we give up the control of
the old ways and acquire new skin. We reject crown, cult,
captivity, classism.

Warning against the cult of ethnicity, Arthur Schlesinger,
Jr., described this as the tension between the America that
"preserves diverse alien identities and America as a
transformative nation with an identity all its own."

It's the shallow media who, like bear-baiters, wants us to believe we are divided into red or blue states. They cannot add. It is the cultural chauvinists who divide us by propaganda, half truths, bad history, and the demand for my rights over against our rights.

Americans become Americans because, regardless of your cultural heritage, together we submit to and stand tall upon our British constitutional principles of individual freedom, liberty of conscience, political democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. These truths are more important than any one of us. They're more important than any one agenda, party, ideology, ethnicity, religion.

One nation under God. The naïve and mistaken use this phrase as boast or blessing when it is admonition. If we stand under God, we're held accountable to God. It's our national burden. Our responsibility. Our privilege. Our purpose. Our duty.