July 4! An American holiday celebrated on its real date. We remember July 4, 1776, the
day the second continental Congress unanimously issued the Declaration of
Independence. It states:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness …”

These words are familiar, yet still stirring. It is
worth considering how they state belief in
truths that are self-evident. These include the
existence of a God who has created all
human beings equal and endowed with
unalienable rights. The rest of the document
lists the many perceived transgressions of
these truths, perpetrated by the reigning
monarch. But this one excerpt from the text
provides an ongoing agenda.

Some 165 years later, in his 1941 State of the Union address, Franklin D. Roosevelt,
addressed the nation, upholding the now famous four freedoms: freedom of speech and
of religion; freedom from want and from fear. Now, not just the emerging United States
was at risk; this protection of freedoms was for the world.

A few years later (Oct. 24, 1945) the United Nations formally came into being. This was
followed in 1948, by the formal proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human
Rights, a document significantly influenced by Eleanor Roosevelt. It lists 30 rights
belonging to all people, throughout the world.

Self-evident truths, unalienable and universal human rights. These are part of the dream
pursued by humans in every era. Centuries before all of the above, Jesus addressed
the same human thirst for truth and freedom. To his disciples, he promises:

“If you remain in my word … you will know the truth
and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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