Rev's Reflections

Red, White and Blue Birthday

Do you remember the Bicentennial 50 years ago? I was 9 years old, and maybe I'm romanticizing a bit, but I remember it being kind of magical. National pride in the 200th birthday was *everywhere*. Flags were everywhere. Red, white and blue was the theme for advertisements, shopping bags, even products themselves.

I remember how my siblings and I saved all the "200"-themed bottles and cans that everything — from soda to syrup — came in, thinking they'd some day be valuable.

People decorated in red, white and blue. Even my parents, the least jingoistic people I know, redid my younger brother's room in stars and stripes. (They are from Canada, where until very recently jingoism wasn't even a thing).

When Independence Day arrived, it felt like a complete frenzy of excitement, which lingered until Christmas nudged it aside.

Just before the weekend, my neighborhood suddenly filled with flags, as it always does before Memorial Day, and they will stay up until after the Fourth of July. The funny thing is, I don't think it's any different from any previous year. The only place I've noticed any 250th paraphernalia is at that notoriously jingoistic and conservative home improvement superstore I try to avoid like the plague.

Is this quarter millenium birthday celebration just not happening? Or is it low key? Or by invitation only?

I don't know about you, but I'm totally not feeling the celebration. I feel like democracy is hanging on by a thread on the edge of a flag, tattered from being driven around at 75MPH in the back of a pickup truck for the last nine years or so. I want to celebrate, hoping against hope that our foundational principles can be saved. Principles like separation of church and state, democracy of the people without kings, and individual autonomy while being accountable to one another.

I guess what I'm struggling with is this: how to publicly own and celebrate those values I hold dear — the values under fire by the administration — without looking like I'm supporting the direction in which we seem to be headed?

One thing I know for sure. I will not be flying that "Don't Tread On Me" flag.

In Peace,
Rev. Denis