July 3, 2016

There are three different references to the red, white and blue in the windows of College Church. If you can find all three, you receive a firm handshake from the pastor.

The oddest is in the main nave on the south side above the window depicting St. Robert Bellarmine. He’s easy to spot dressed in the red clothes of a cardinal. The window at the very top has the colors of the United States surrounded by very difficult to read names. The names are in fact prominent Catholic figures of the Revolutionary War. They include a Polish noble, Casmir Pulaski, considered the father of the American cavalry; the Englishman Charles Carroll signer of the Declaration of Independence; and the most famous the Marquis de Lafayette.

So why are these prominent and not so prominent 18th century figures in our windows? When the windows were designed and installed there remained a great deal of anti-Catholicism in our country. Many people believed Catholics could not be good citizens because the owed allegiance to a foreign power, the Pope. Clearly the idea was to demonstrate that faithful Catholics had from the very beginning of our country been crucial to its success.

The window is a powerful reminder to us as we celebrate the 4th of July. There is much talk about “foreigners” and the detriment they are to our nation. Those names show if it were not for foreigners professing a despised religion the United States would not exist. It is a shame more of our fellow Americans can’t see that window.

Fr. Dan White, S.J.