



As Catholics we have two dates to remember when we celebrate the Independence in these Great United States of ours. One day is of course July 4<sup>TH</sup> and the second is August 2<sup>ND</sup>. The reason for this is one signature. The signature that should be of great interest to us is that of Charles Carroll, the only Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Charles Carroll was born in 1737 in Maryland. While the colony was originally founded as a haven for Catholics, by Carroll's time Catholics were not allowed to hold office or even vote. (A 1704 statute in Maryland placed these prohibitions into law to "prevent the growth of Popery in this Province.") He was the richest man in the Colonies which allowed him some freedom that others did not have. He was elected to the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. The copy of the document with which we are familiar was written in calligraphy and signed by the delegates on August 2, 1776. His signature read "Charles Carroll of Carrollton". He was a member of the Second Continental Congress, a member of the Maryland State Senate, and the first United States Senator from Maryland. All this after at one time not even being able to vote! He was the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. He died in 1832 at age 95. He was the grandson of an Irish immigrant.