

Dear Friends,

John Winthrop was the leader of the Puritans who founded Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. Of course the "Puritans" got a bad name, for most people the term is a put-down; in fact, as I recall, the term originated with their enemies (Anglicans), the "Puritans" called themselves Congregationalists but acquiesced in the nickname.

I've long admired the Puritans in general, and Winthrop individually. Specifically, many of you have heard me quote Winthrop on the concept of **community**. When the Puritan fleet arrived in North America in 1630, anchored temporarily in Salem harbor before going to Boston, he preached a sermon to his constituents. The sermon has been titled by historians, "An Errand Into the Wilderness." You read it right near the beginning of your American history class in high school.

The most famous passage in the sermon was quoted notably in 1960 by John Kennedy in his farewell address to the Massachusetts legislature, and egregiously misquoted by Ronald Reagan in speeches later. Winthrop, paraphrasing a Gospel passage, said that we should see America "as a city upon a hill," meaning that this experiment in a new politics and a new religion would be visible throughout the world, all would take note of it, and that therefore failure would be shameful. Winthrop's reference (like that of Jesus) was not at all prideful, but was humbly a warning admonition. Reagan misquoted Winthrop by saying (and many others have said it since) that America is "a shining city upon a hill," twisting the meaning to the very opposite of what Winthrop sought to encourage. To **admonish** is one of the Seven Spiritual works of Mercy; **pride**, on the other hand, is the first of the Seven Deadly Sins.

The conclusion of Winthrop's sermon is the passage I have so often quoted as the conclusion to classes and conferences I have conducted, and it is a paraphrase of passages in the letters of Saint Paul. Winthrop said,
"We must rejoice together and mourn together, labor and suffer **together**, our community, as members of the same body."

Happy birthday to John Winthrop, of blessed memory, may he rest in peace.

JY