

JULY THE MONTH OF “FREEDOM”

For Americans, there are two things that are really important about the month of July. First, it's in the middle of summer and it is a prime time for family vacations. Second, it is the season during-which we celebrate the birthday of this nation – a birthday that is based on freedom and justice for all peoples. There are always a lot of celebrations centered around the Fourth of July and the gift that our freedom has meant to us.

Freedom is an interesting concept. There are many definitions of what freedom is and multiple understandings about how we experience it. For most people, freedom means the ability to do whatever you want to do. To come and go where and when you wish – to engage in activities and careers that please and gratify you, to believe what you want or don't want to believe. It involves the ability to be “you” and to engage in those things that bring you peace and joy. For most of us, freedom can rapidly become a pretty self-centered ideal. It's what I want, what's good for me, what I treasure or hold important. Of course, the operational word in all of these definition is “I”.

Real freedom though, isn't about what's good for me – it's about what's good for everybody. It's about making sure that everyone gets a fair part of God's gifts and the benefits of His creation. It's about promoting a sense of sharing to insure that everyone has enough to eat, quality health care, just working conditions, good educational opportunities, adequate clothing and transportation, substantial housing. True Christian freedom is not the freedom to choose what I want, but the freedom to choose what is good and right. Our human “free will” does not give us the right to choose what is wrong – that really is called license – the license to sin. Free will implies that we use our God given talents to seek what is good and godly.

In the final analysis, freedom is not a personal or individual right. True freedom is what promotes what is just and good for all peoples. Whenever someone else suffers because of our injurious decisions, we are not using true freedom correctly. For example, - it is really quite impossible to say that we have the freedom to abort an unborn child. Freedom as a gift from God never involves the rights of anyone else being suspended or compromised. Freedom as a gift the Lord gives us always involves promoting what is good for others. Freedom is always a corporate gift – to be used for the good of all.

This Fourth of July, when you hear or see the fireworks going off with a mighty explosion, remember that you and I are called to make an equally big “bang” about decrying practices that compromise other people's God given freedom and always supporting those decisions and practices that have always made our country morally strong, God fearing – those things that always promote true and lasting Freedom.

Have a great month.