

Saint Bernadette Parish Saint Mary Parish

1343 Wheeling Road NE (740) 654 • 1893
LANCASTER, OH 43130-8701

602 Marietta Street (740) 569 • 7929
BREMEN, OH 43107

[stbernadetteparish . net](http://stbernadetteparish.net)



the Calling of Peter and Andrew

Painted in tempera on wood (1308-1311) by the Sienese painter, Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255-1319)

in the National Gallery of Art, Washington

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

from today's Gospel, Matthew 4:18-20

The 3rd Sunday of the Year

JANUARY 22, 2017

Our Parishes

FATHER THOMAS KESSLER (614) 634-0499
pastor wnthomaskessler@icloud.com

AT ST BERNADETTE PARISH

<http://stbernadetteparish.net>

MARK SCARPITTI (740) 438-3970
deacon den.mark@frontier.com
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ANN ESSMAN (740) 653-9347
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LIZ LATORRE (740) 243-1872
liturgical music lizlаторre@gmail.com

The St Bernadette Parish office is in the Mary Good Center, across the back parking lot from the school.

Hours are: 9 AM-1 PM, MWThF; 11 AM-1 PM, Tu.

1343 Wheeling Rd NE,
Lancaster, OH 43130-8701 (740) 654-1893

AT BREMEN ST MARY PARISH

BEN FACTOR
liturgical music b_factor@lancaster.k12.oh.us
JIM SCHMELZER (740) 215-3894
maintenance chair
TYNA FOX-SCHMELZER (614) 371-7702
religious education

The St Mary Parish office is at the church vestibule.

Hours are 9-11 AM, Tu.

602 Marietta St,
Bremen, OH 43107 (740) 569-7929

AT BOTH PARISHES

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AT ST BERNADETTE SCHOOL

PAM ELTRINGHAM peltring@cdeducation.org
principal
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secretary

Saint Bernadette School is located at

1325 Wheeling Rd, (740) 654-3137
Lancaster, OH 43130-8701

www.stbernadetteschool.com

stbernlan@cdeducation.org.

Sacramental Life

BAPTISM

To have a child baptized, you must register and attend a class as a couple (unless attendance just isn't possible, in which case some discussion with Kathy Kehnast will be necessary). Sessions are held quarterly for both parishes. The next session will be Feb 22. Try to take the class before the child is born. If you are expecting, call Kathy to register for the class.

Please don't ask if you "have to go." This is an opportunity to meet with parents of children about the same age as your little one; they are in the same wonderful boat as you are.

At least one parent must be a practicing Catholic. Both godparents need to be practicing Catholics. If you don't attend Sunday Mass regularly (a major component of being a practicing Catholic), there is something you can do about it: Start coming to Sunday Mass.

PENANCE

The priest is available for Penance

- at St Bernadette Saturdays at 3 PM and Thursdays at 5:30 PM, and
- at St Mary Bremen on Sunday at 8 AM.

In addition to Advent and Lenten Penance Services, every Catholic priest is available whenever there is a need. There are Penance opportunities for parochial school children **four times during the year so that they will learn the beauty of frequent confession**. The Church's law requires us to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year.

ANOINTING AND CARE OF THE SICK

The Sick receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick when

- dangerously ill,
- facing major surgery, or
- suffering from the ravages of old age.

We celebrate the sacrament communally at a Sunday Mass before Advent and during the Easter season so that we can all pray with you for "health of mind and body."

And, we are happy to bring Penance, Anointing, and Holy Communion to the homes or hospitals of the sick or shut in. It is very helpful to call the parish office to let us know before a hospitalization or when it has been too long since the sacraments were last available.

HOLY MATRIMONY

Couples wishing to marry should contact the parish office six months before they wish to celebrate the sacrament. Why so long? Because **this sacrament, not just the ceremony, requires serious preparation**. And the Church needs to be involved in that preparation.

The Church wishes to support couples through the years of their married life. That's why our diocese offers programs to enhance married life. To learn about these programs, watch the weekly bulletin.

let us pray together

with the Church today

Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

with the Holy Father in January: Christian Unity

That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching
by striving with prayer and fraternal charity
to restore ecclesial communion
and by collaborating
to meet the challenges facing humanity.

in both parishes

christian initiation

Please pray for our **catechumens**. They are **officially-welcomed** members (albeit not yet full members) of the household of faith. These include **Ralph Mohler and his son Bryant** of Bremen St Mary, and **Jennifer Palmer** of St Bernadette. They have publicly ratified their desire to become baptized members of the Catholic Church and are preparing for the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. Learn their names so you can pray for them. Find out who they are so you can make them feel welcome.

psr (aka parish school of religion)

Remember: Catholic parents have a **solemn moral duty** to see that their children are **properly and completely instructed in the Catholic Faith**. And they have a duty to see that their children attend every week—barring health or weather deterrents, natural disasters or warfare—but not school outings or athletic events. This is a really important duty. Children will find **getting to know Jesus and his Church is an irreplaceable and joy-filled part of their upbringing**. Don't worry if from time to time they don't yet feel the joy. Stick with it. It will come.

sacristan / ushers

These are the people who make things flow smoothly during our Sunday (including Saturday evening) Masses. They get things ready, make sure all the other ministers are ready, and help late arrivals find a seat with a minimum of disruption. Want to help? Contact Kathy Kehnast or one of the folks you see doing the job.

some other ways to support your parish

You can support your parish with **gifts of cash, appreciated assets, real estate, retirement plans, life insurance and even a trust or bequest in your will**. Designate St Mary Bremen or St Bernadette (or another non-profit Catholic entity) to benefit from your gift knowing that these gifts are invested in ways that are faithful to Catholic teaching. For donors age 70½ and older, the IRA Charitable Rollover is permanent law. Under this provision, these donors can transfer up to \$100,000 from their IRA to an endowment fund at The Catholic Foundation. The transfer is made free of federal income tax and the gift qualifies for the donor's required minimum distribution. Should you have questions or need assistance, contact The Catholic Foundation. They can help you take advantage of these opportunities in support of your beloved organizations. They can be reached at (614) 443-8893.

propagation of the faith

The annual collection for the Propagation of the Faith happened last Sunday. These funds are used for the **spreading of the Faith through missionary efforts**. Thank you for your generosity in assisting the Church's great evangelization project.

altar flowers

If you wish to **donate altar flowers for 2017** contact either parish office. Your donation of \$40 may be placed in the collection basket at Mass.



at St Mary parish

Mass intentions at St Mary

Sunday, Jan 22 8:30 AM for the people of the parish
Tuesday, Jan 24 8:20 AM Helen Kunkler
Sunday, Jan 29 8:30 AM for the people of the parish

very newly baptized!

Welcome and pray for St Mary's newest Christian, **Conner Lee Ashbaugh**, son of Kristopher and Kelsey Ashbaugh, who was baptized on Sunday, Jan 15.

what st vincent does at st mary bremen

The famous "*season of giving*" isn't really over yet. For people in a financial jam, the season of need seems to go on throughout the year, especially when it starts to get really cold out. So, the **St Vincent de Paul Society in Bremen** takes up a collection after Mass on the first Sunday of the month, every month. New members are always welcome. For information, call Angi Skinner at (740) 438-0027.

sunday at Mass at bremen st mary

	lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	gifts	sacristan / usher
Sun, Jan 22 8:30 AM	Linda Qualls	Reagan & Spencer Conrad	Damian & Deborah Schmelzer, Tyna Schmelzer-Fox	James Noll Jr family	Damian Schmelzer
Sun, Jan 29 8:30 AM	Jeanne Schmelzer	Caden & Cody Fyffe	Jim Schmelzer, Angi Skinner, Karen Wolfe	Maurice Schmelzer family	Joe Young

at St Bernadette parish

Mass intentions at St Bernadette

Saturday, Jan 21 4 PM Michael Clark
Sunday, Jan 22 11 AM for the people of the parish
Monday, Jan 23 8:20 AM Hugh Patrick Messerly
Wednesday, Jan 25 8:20 AM James Mahon IV
Thursday, Jan 26 6:00 PM Wilford & Loretta Beiter
Friday, Jan 27 8:20 AM Jean Wadsworth
Saturday, Jan 28 4 PM for the people of the parish
Sunday, Jan 29 11 AM for the people of the parish

mardi gras at st bernadette

Come and enjoy the annual pre-Lenten celebration and fundraiser on Saturday, Feb 11, from 5-10 PM. The date has had to be changed this year only from the traditional "fat Tuesday" anticipation of the Lenten austerity beginning on Ash Wednesday (March 1 this year). This **wonderful family night** raises funds to **support St Bernadette School**. Festivities include games and movies for the kids, \$1000 grand raffle, silent and live auctions, music, and fabulous food featuring our signature Fat Tuesday sliders, French Quarter french fries, cole slaw *d'carnival*, mini king cakes, pizza, and more. Parishioners, bring your friends and family to support our Catholic school. Grand prize raffle tickets are \$10 each and will be sold after Masses on Jan 28 and 29 and Feb 4 and 5 or through the school office at (740) 654-3137.

st vincent de paul 5th sunday collection

Members of the St Vincent de Paul Society will take **up a collection at the church doors** on Jan 28 and 29, the 5th Sunday this month. Please be generous. The society helps the needy in the Lancaster area. They operate on income from their store and from your donations.

sunday at Mass at st bernadette

	Lector	servers	extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion	
Sat, Jan 21 4 PM	Sandy Landefeld	Samantha Kerns, Jack Tencza, Diana Woo	Terry Carpenter Amy Woo Bob & Angie Christy	Craig Shaw Susan Garrett
Sun, Jan 22 11 AM	David Shonk	Addy Myers, Dominic & Emeline Neighbor	Tara Craaybeek Mary Jane Vajen Jean Robertson	Ben Peters Patrick Gins Becky Wickham
Sat, Jan 28 4 PM	Becky Kuhn	Kendall Cox, Avee & Drew Solt	Rose DeFillippo Jim Kuhn Lee Guinan	Joyce Guenther Marguerite Grimm Denise McGuire
Sun, Jan 29 11 AM	Patrick Gins	Brooke, Bryson, & Zachary Vogel	Pat Dreyer Jim & Rita Merk John & Teresa Hartig	David Shonk

in the diocese of columbus

catholic men's luncheon club

The next Catholic Men's Luncheon Club features Bishop Frederick Campbell and the presentation of **the 2017 Catholic Man of the Year**. Join Bishop Campbell on Friday, Feb 3, at St Patrick Church in downtown Columbus. Mass at 11:45 AM will be followed by lunch and the presentation of the Catholic Man of the Year until about 1 PM. No reservations are necessary. \$10 covers the lunch and meeting. Bring a friend. For information on Catholic Men's Luncheons, visit [www . ColumbusCatholicMen . com](http://www.ColumbusCatholicMen.com) or contact Tim Merkle, CMLC President at [htm @ ejhlaw . com](mailto:htm@ejhlaw.com).

male & female He created them: complementarity & intimacy in marriage

All married couples are invited to the diocesan celebration of World Marriage Day on Sunday, Feb 26, from 1-4 PM at Immaculate Conception Church, 414 E North Broadway, Columbus. Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers will search Sacred Scripture and Church teaching to examine **what God teaches us about the differences between authentic male and female spirituality**. He will explore how to enhance the intimate relationship of husbands and wives. **A Holy Hour for Marriage** will follow his talk. There is no charge for the event but space is limited. RSVP by Feb 13 at [http://familylife . coldsioc . org](http://familylife.coldsdioc.org) or (614) 241-2560.

God can save your marriage

Has your marriage become unloving or uncaring? Your relationship grown cold or distant? **Thinking about a separation or divorce?** Already separated or divorced but you wish to try again? The *Retrouvaille* program may help you. *Retrouvaille* of Columbus will be sponsoring its next program on Feb 10-12 at the Procter Center retreat house in London, Ohio. The program consists of a weekend experience and follow-up sessions. All inquiries are confidential. For more details or to register go to [HelpOurMarriage . com](http://HelpOurMarriage.com) or call (800) 470-2230.

the book of Revelation

Dr Thomas Smith will speak on Revelation, the book, on Saturday, Jan 28, from noon to 3 PM at St John Neumann Church in Sunbury. Dr Smith's presentation will include discussion of the mysterious figures and events in the book of Revelation and provide insight into **how the Mass is really heaven on earth**. He will give the big picture for understanding Revelation and will share specific **keys for unlocking its images and characters**. He will also reveal key characteristics for **fearlessly, faithfully, and fruitfully sharing our faith**. This event is free and everyone is welcome. Contact Tina Burch, director of Evangelization, with questions at [tburch . saintjohn @ gmail . com](mailto:tburch@saintjohn@gmail.com)

men's conference

and women's conference

These are big events coming in February you won't want to miss. At each of these Saturday events Bishop Campbell will celebrate Mass and there will be opportunities for Penance, as well as some entertainment and lots of fellowship with a thousand or two of the most interesting people in central Ohio. Put them on your calendar now.

- Women of our diocese will gather on Feb 18 with a theme of **"Courageous Faith, Contagious Joy."**
- Men will meet on Feb 25 with a theme of **"Into the Breach – Call to Battle"**

Both events will take place at the Ohio Expo Center at the Ohio fairsgrounds in Columbus.

josephinum lecture series

The Pontifical College Josephinum's annual lecture series continues Wednesday, Feb 8, with a presentation by Christopher Ruddy, PhD, associate professor of systematic theology at The Catholic University of America. Dr. Ruddy will present **"Gaudium et Spes: Its Crafting and Legacy"** at 7 PM in the Jessing Center on the Josephinum campus. The event is free of charge and open to the public; reservations not required. For information, call the Academic Dean's office at (614) 985-2274.

catholic youth summer camp

Catholic Youth Summer Camp is Ohio's one week-long, residential high adventure camp for students entering grades 6-12. Activities typically include jet skis, water tubing, paintball, blobbing, high ropes, archery tag, zip lining, rock climbing, giant swing, and mountain boarding. CYSC offers **a truly Catholic and safe environment with daily catechesis that awakens faith and builds missionary disciples**. A week at camp includes daily Mass, adoration, reconciliation, small group conversations, worship, service and authentic community. This is especially valuable for young people who are not now receiving other catechesis as well as to reinforce catechesis for those who are. Go to [www . cysc . com](http://www.cysc.com) for information and to register for 2017 dates: high school sessions run the weeks of June 11, 18, 25, and July 2; middle school sessions run the weeks of July 9, 16, 23, and 30. Registration is open now.

happily ever after

... despite the rough spots

Come to a Marriage Encounter weekend and learn ways to use your marriage's ups and downs to deepen your love for each other and for God. Why not **try a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend?** The next weekends in central Ohio are Feb 17-19 and Apr 21-23. For information or to register, contact Paul or Marilou Clouse at (614) 834-6880 or visit [www . wmccolumbus . org](http://www.wmccolumbus.org).

pilgrimage to fatima and lourdes

Fr Stash Dailey, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Columbus, invites you to join him on a pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes from June 19-30, **celebrating the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima**. For details, contact Liz Grinder at the Lourdes Pilgrimage Office at (877) 276-7279 or lourdespilgrimageoffice@comcast.net or go to www.lourdes-pilgrimage.com. Reservation deadline is March 15.

vehicle donations to the josephinum

The Pontifical College Josephinum is a Catholic Seminary in Columbus. Seminarians there are studying for the priesthood and need transportation from time to time for a variety of local needs. The Josephinum has a fleet of vehicles but could use additional vans. If you have a **used van that you could donate** to the Josephinum, contact their business office at (614) 985-2230 so delivery arrangements can be made. The Josephinum is a non-profit charitable organization and will provide you with the appropriate documentation for the donation of a vehicle.

from the chair

Bishop Campbell takes your questions from 5 - 6 PM on Tuesday, Feb 7, during his live monthly call-in show, "*From the Chair*". Call St Gabriel Catholic Radio at (614) 459-4820 to ask **your question about the Catholic faith and growing in holiness**.

in the deanery

fisher catholic: irish, but italian too!

The Fisher Catholic High School annual spaghetti dinner happens today, Sunday, Jan 22, from noon until 6 PM. Cost for adults is \$7, for children 12 and under is \$5. This is an authentic spaghetti dinner served with salad, rolls, and dessert. Dine in or carry out. Tickets are available at the door. Proceeds **benefit Fisher Catholic athletics**.

a culture of life

holy hour and day of abstinence to pray for a return of respect for life

This evening, Sunday, Jan 22, at 7 PM St Bernadette Parish will have a solemn Holy Hour to pray for a cultural recovery in our country and around the world. It will take place **at St Bernadette**, but will be a prayer for both communities and for others who wish to join us in prayer. We will **silently ask God to help us to respect all human life**, especially **the life of the most vulnerable and least obviously "useful"**, God's beloved unborn and handicapped and elderly. We will conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 8 PM.

And by the way, Friday is always **a day when the Church reminds us of the need to do penance for ours and each others' sins**. So please try to join in observing **voluntary Friday abstinence** from meat that day in reparation for our sins against God's precious gift of human life. Remember that he, and not you or I, is Lord of life.

9 days for life

Join thousands of Catholics across the country coming together in prayer during the bishops' pro-life novena, 9 Days for Life, from Saturday, Jan 21 through Sunday, Jan 29. Participate through

email, text message, Facebook, or a free iOS or Android app. www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/january-roe-events/nine-days-of-prayer-penance-and-pilgrimage.cfm.

national prayer vigil and march for life

Is it prayer? Is it political action? Well, yes, it is both. The annual March for Life date is shifted to Friday, Jan 27, due to the presidential inauguration the week before. The annual National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception will be the night before, Thursday, Jan 26. For details and a listing of Washington area events visit www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/resources/index.cfm.

day of prayer

for the legal protection of unborn children

Bishop Frederick Campbell will celebrate the annual **Respect Life Mass on Monday, Jan 23, at 10:30 AM at St Joseph Cathedral**. On this day of the anniversary of the US Supreme Court decision Roe v Wade, our diocese will join the Church all over the country to observe a Day of Prayer for **the Legal Protection of Unborn Children**. And we are invited. For information about the Church's teaching on life issues, visit www.usccb.org/prolife or contact the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540.

roe remembrance at the statehouse

Greater Columbus Right to Life will sponsor the **annual Roe Remembrance event** on Monday, Jan 23, at the Ohio Statehouse. The hour-long program will begin at noon and be held in the Statehouse atrium. Due to Statehouse security restrictions, no stickers, signs or weapons are permitted inside. For information, visit Greater Columbus Right to Life online at www.gctrl.org.

what does "pro-life" mean to you?

Certainly, being pro-life is to **oppose any form of abortion, euthanasia**, or other taking of innocent human life. But, it's more than that.

To be pro-life is **to care about others**. To be pro-life is **to put the political in perspective** and yearn for the charitable. It's the embracing of tenderness, the treasure of compassion. Ultimately, the depth of our conviction is measured in our love for one another. So, being pro-life is **to build a community**. A community that cares. A community that sees Christ in others. A pro-life community. And, in the end, this community will not have a mandate to make abortion illegal, or more restricted. The mandate for the pro-life community and the Christians that inhabit it will **not be to make abortion illegal, but to make it unthinkable**.

EWTN pro-life coverage

EWTN's January coverage includes the Walk for Life West Coast, One Life LA and the March for Life in Washington DC. Hear exclusive **interviews with key pro-life leaders** and pilgrims from around the country. Visit www.ewtn.com/prolife for information.

guidance in prayer

children at Mass

It is great to see very young people at Mass. Even to hear them. But **parents need to train their children** in the appropriate times to kneel, sit, stand, and face the altar. We are grateful when they are not engaged in playing with toys, or eating, and drinking (a bottle is okay; Cheerios aren't!). Emergencies can always happen.

But take them to **the bathroom before Mass** so they won't have to take a stroll during Mass. Those things get in the way of teaching children that Jesus is there on the altar and why, and teaching them how important it is to participate in the Mass.

saints to celebrate and prayers to offer

Mon, Jan 23	a day of prayer for the legal protection of unborn children
Tues, Jan 24	St Francis de Sales
Weds, Jan 25	Conversion of St Paul the Apostle
Thurs, Jan 26	Sts Timothy & Titus
Fri, Jan 27	St Angela Merici
Sat, Jan 28	St Thomas Aquinas

God's word at Sunday Mass

Sunday, Jan 22, 3 rd Sunday	Isaiah 8:23-9:3 Psalm 27	1 Corinthians 1:10-17 Matthew 4:12-23
Sunday, Jan 29, 4 th Sunday	Zephaniah 2:3-3:13 Psalm 146	1 Corinthians 1:26-31 Matthew 5:1-12

God's word on the weekdays

Mon, Jan 23	Hebrews 9:15-28	Ps 98	Mark 3:22-30
Tues, Jan 24	Hebrews 10:1-10	Ps 40	Mark 3:31-35
Weds, Jan 25	Acts 22:3-16	Ps 117	Mark 16:15-18
Thurs, Jan 26	2 Timothy 1:1-8	Ps 96	Mark 4:21-25
Fri, Jan 27	Hebrews 10:32-39	Ps 37	Mark 4:26-34
Sat, Jan 28	Hebrews 11:1-19	Luke 1	Mark 4:35-41

confessions & weekday Mass nearby

These times sometimes change, though, so be sure to call ahead!

	<i>Bremen St Mary</i>	<i>Lancaster St Bernadette</i>	<i>Lancaster St Mary</i>	<i>Lancaster St Mark</i>	<i>Sugar Grove St Joseph</i>	<i>Circleville St Joseph</i>	<i>Logan St John</i>
Monday		8:20 AM	7 AM	8 AM	8 AM	9 AM	8 AM
Tuesday	8:20 AM		9 AM	8 AM	NOON	7 AM	8 AM
Wednesday		8:20 AM	7 AM	6 PM	8 AM	9 AM	9 AM
Thursday		6 PM	9 AM	8 AM	NOON		
Friday		8:20 AM		8 AM	8 AM	9 AM	8 AM
Saturday		1 st Saturday only 9 AM Mass				10 AM	9 AM
confessions	Sunday @ 8AM	Saturday @ 3 PM & @ 8:30 AM on 1st Saturday only	Saturday @ 4 PM	Saturday @ 5:30 PM	½ hour before Mass	Saturday @ 4 PM	Saturday @ 4 PM

Stand on Ceremony?

One thing that has characterized Catholicism, in our country anyway, in recent years is informality. Americans are the people who boast that we “don’t stand on ceremony.” Is that a good thing or bad? It is **good that we try to avoid the rigid excess of meaningless ceremony**. The danger is that **we may think that if I can’t figure out the meaning, it must be meaningless**. The remedy is to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the ancient ceremony. That requires a humility that doesn’t come easily.

Tradition can be hidebound: inflexible and narrow-minded. I hope we are not traditionalist, that we are not unthinking in adherence to tradition. But Catholic faith is deeply involved with fidelity to tradition. The curmudgeonly English Catholic apologist G.K. Chesterton reminded us to pay attention to the voices of the past. **“Tradition means giving a vote to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.”** He continues:

Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man’s opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man’s opinion, even if he is our father.

Respecting this “democracy of the dead” can lead to some difficult discoveries. When I was a young man I was eager to see the Mass celebrated “facing the people.” But through the many previous centuries Catholics did not think the priest was praying “with his back to the people.” All the people faced the same way, towards the Lord, to whom we all looked East, toward the rising of the sun. When the priest stands facing the people we must be particularly alert to avoid seeing the presider as the focus of the attention, in a circle that is contained in this world and that forgets to look beyond together. I don’t know how it would work ever to change back to having the priest standing the other way around at the altar. But counting the vote of the dead means paying respectful attention to the wisdom of the past. When I was young I couldn’t imagine that there was wisdom to the ways that things had been done. Now I need to learn the wisdom of the ages past. That wisdom will enrich us all.

— Father Kessler

Freedom of Choice

Americans love to have lots of choices. I think we all do. I was in Prague in 1992, very soon after the fall of Communism. I needed to get some glue to fix a shoe with its sole coming loose. I went to the biggest department store in the heart of the city. I knew that in my own country my biggest problem would be finding the right kind of glue, something that wasn't water soluble, and then getting a good brand. But it didn't work that way. There was only one kind of glue in the whole store. It wasn't the right kind. I wanted more choices.

As I walked through the store I noticed that there seemed to be fewer choices: for instance, only a few kinds of shirts in maybe two different colors, with fewer different sizes. I got to thinking that nobody on the streets seemed well dressed; almost everybody looked kind of frumpy. I understand that things have changed in Prague since then. The economics of consumer choice—which just wasn't an option in a communist society — have set in. The Czechs live much more like people in Western Europe and North America; capitalist prosperity has made available lots more choices. I guess that is progress.

But it made me think about choices. I am glad that I live in **a land of freedom, where not all my choices are made for me.** But it is vitally important to think about what that freedom amounts to.

Nearly a century ago the great Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr, wrote that freedom of speech does not include **a right to shout “Fire” in a crowded theater.** So, ought freedom to be limited? An individual's freedom to do what he wants is not the only consideration to enter the important area of decision making. Some things the state must limit—for the good of the other members of the society (as in the case of the other people in the crowded theater), at times even for the good of the person himself (as in the case of the limitations of the freedom of action of small children or adolescents). Sometimes the state enacts limitations on individual freedoms so that it can set a standard. This is what is happening when the state says “No” to pornography or to prostitution or to burning the flag. Opponents of these limitations argue that this is infringing on freedom of speech. What speech is involved in the activities is not explained. But, more importantly, **what does being free to act self-destructively or in a way that is destructive of our society have to do with real freedom?** People will argue that establishing bans on such activity is an imposition of the religion of one group in society on others. They claim that this violates their freedom of religion. They do not explain how the fact that an action is forbidden by a religion makes that action something that cannot be forbidden by the state without imposing a religion. If they are right, the fact that Islam or Mormonism do not approve of murder might mean that the state cannot ban murder. Look at what the First Amendment of our American Constitution says about freedom of religion (the first freedom it mentions) and about freedom of speech, press, assembly, and redress:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Whatever we may think of the other freedoms, this constitutional freedom of religion is **not about protecting the government or the citizens from religion, but rather about protecting religion and the citizens from the encroachments of the government.** Freedom of religion does not intend to keep the religiously motivated from having a voice in the kind of society we create together.

Sometimes when the state doesn't limit our freedom of action people may think that there is therefore no duty. In fact, the opposite may be the case. If there is no law against killing unborn babies, it is the duty of citizens to seek a ban on such killing. This is **not a weakening of our freedom of choice; it is an insistence of the right of the babies to live.**

“Freedom of Choice”, as it is currently called, is a strenuous effort against the freedom to live of unborn babies. It insists on a legal requirement that health care professionals and institutions participate in killing these babies, and that taxpayers and health insurance providers be required to fund them. We look to new officers in our government, praying that they hold fast to the promise to end such murderous policies.

We Americans like to have our choices. But **some choices should not be available. Especially the destructive ones, the murderous ones.** Consumers want ever more choices. That's what makes the words “freedom of choice” sound so very attractive. But here we are dealing with a choice that has much deeper meaning than the choice of exactly what kind of glue we want for fixing our shoes. When we are given the choice of being able to kill the very young who are also so often very inconvenient, we will not have a society that is more free but a society that is more barbaric. We must **become again a society that rejects a bias against the truth just because that truth is also enshrined in religious teaching.**

— *Father Kessler*

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