

2 Pastoral Letter

Clergy

Fr. Miguel Hernandez, Pastor
Fr. Martin Bui, Parochial Vicar
Fr. Don Romito, Retired Priest
Fr. Eamon O'Gorman, Retired Priest
Deacon Ken Kleckner
Deacon Jim Merle
Deacon Jorge Ramirez
Deacon Victor Valenzuela

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Summer Pongetti, Liturgy/Adult Faith
Jerry Cates, Plant Manager
Henrietta Moreno, Administrative Asst.
Andrea Rodriguez, Receptionist
Eric Brunter, Youth Ministry
Katherine Gonzalez, Youth Ministry
Liliana Duran, Children's Faith Formation
Paul Nguyen, Music Ministry

Baptisms

Please complete the online registration form at www.stjosephplacentia.org/baptism and you will be contacted by a Deacon.

Anointing of the Sick

Please call the Parish Center office.

Funerals

Please call the Parish Center office.

Marriages

Please call the Parish Center office at least six months in advance.

I am writing this pastoral letter in anticipation of Sunday, July 4, 2021. This year the Fourth of July, Independence Day, falls on a Sunday, and so some words about the religious significance of this national holiday might be in order.

One of the themes of this day (and tomorrow when we celebrate with another day off), is, as you might expect, freedom. Freedom, and the people who made it possible, are what we rightly celebrate today. And, if you are reading this before or after church, we look at freedom through the eyes of faith.

Our country's founders made this connection between faith and freedom in the very beginning of the Declaration of Independence. As most of us know by heart, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And however imperfectly we have lived up to them, these remain our loftiest of ideals.

For some people, liberty and freedom mean doing whatever you want, whenever you want, regardless of other people.

This kind of "freedom" is more like narcissism than true freedom. It puts a person's ego ahead of every other concern.

Real freedom is different. Real freedom, genuine freedom, is the ability to do what we should do, not just what we want to do. And what is it that we should do in order to be truly free? And where do we learn about it? From the Bible, of course, and from the life of Jesus, who said that "the truth shall set you free." It was Jesus who said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's—and to God the things that are God's."

The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes set the parameters of this religious freedom, and what belongs to God. It is up to us, and to each generation, to flesh this out in practice. This is no easy task; and especially in our American society today, it is especially difficult. I have discovered in the last year or two just how difficult it is to be both an American, and a Catholic, today.

We must grapple with these issues in an increasingly secular society, but we can do so with courage and confidence. The secular world does not share our values, for the most part, and so we must fight to maintain them. Respect for the dignity of all human life comes to mind, as does our fundamental right to practice our faith as we see fit in the face of coercion and threats of punishment.

True freedom lies in the ability to love and to serve, expressing the two great commandments to love God and our neighbor. It means putting people before things, and putting religious truths before ideologies. And so we ask on this Fourth of July, "What is the truth that makes us free?"

Father Don Romito