

Sunday June 30, 2019

## Pastor's Column

### The Fourth of July – “True” Freedom

On July 2, 1776, the American Continental Congress declared that the thirteen colonies were no longer subject to British rule, but were free, independent and *united* states. That declaration was ratified on July 4, 1776, which enshrined July 4 as the memorial date of U.S. freedom.

The key part of the Declaration of Independence says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that *they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*; and that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men.”

In 1791, the U.S. Congress promulgated a Bill of Rights for the newly formed nation, enumerating particular rights and freedoms that the government would protect, including freedom of religion, speech, press and assembly. These became part of our U.S. Constitution.

We who live in the U.S. are blessed to have protected freedoms that are central to our nation's origin and acknowledged by our forefathers as rights granted by God. Whenever these rights and freedoms are threatened, it is the duty of those who govern us to protect and defend them.

As Christians, as followers of Jesus, we also have a duty whenever our rights and freedoms are threatened. We have a duty to promote a proper understanding of freedom. True freedom is *not* absolute freedom, i.e., the freedom to do whatever we want whenever we want simply because we want it. *True freedom is freedom to do the good.*

True freedom is aligning our will with God's will. Jesus said it this way: “If you hold fast to my teaching, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (Jn. 8:32). The Catholic Catechism says it thus: “There is no freedom except in the service of what is good and true. The choice to do what is evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to ‘the slavery of sin.’” (Catechism, #1733).

As we celebrate our U.S. independence on July 4, we give thanks to God for our national rights and freedoms. We also recommit to standing for true freedom – the freedom to do the good – especially when an individual or the culture tells us that evil is “good.” *Standing for true freedom is the only way truly to be free.*

God bless,  
Fr. Joe