

GOSPEL MEDITATION - ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

July 3, 2022

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Freedom properly defined is freedom properly understood. The Cambridge Dictionary tells us that it is, “the condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc., whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited.” That same dictionary defines liberty as, “the freedom to live, work, and travel as you want to.” Both definitions sound very similar. Is there a difference between freedom and liberty? Many are accustomed to believing that freedom and liberty are interchangeable and simply involve possessing rights and privileges. For the Christian, however, there is a big difference between the two.

St. John Chrysostom directs that “the only person who is free is the one who lives for Christ.” There are many other inspirational people throughout history who see freedom as something far greater than liberty. True and properly understood freedom has little to do with entitlement or self-promotion. For the believer, it is a matter of the heart and soul. Freedom (and liberty, for that matter), seen only in terms of the world, can quickly be taken away. The freedom spoken of by St. John Chrysostom can only be lost by personal choice. When one lives for Christ, they live in pursuit of virtues that enlighten one’s soul (faith, hope, and love) and strengthen one’s character (justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence). Rather than having the ability to acquire or do more things, true freedom asks us to be detached. Privileges, rights, and responsibilities are important, but they do not define us.

The world is not always open to listening to the truth. “I am sending you like lambs among wolves,” Jesus tells his disciples. The secular definitions of freedom and liberty are very attractive. They promise us a great deal. It is no wonder Jesus asks his disciples to travel with very little. The Gospel is not dependent upon things or anything those with worldly power or investment can say or do. When one chooses to live for Christ, they choose to live with peace. That’s what true freedom will give us. If we do not want what Christ offers, we can close the door, and the messenger will walk away. Distracted by the lure of personal liberties, we risk losing our freedom. We will not have anything truly life-giving to share with others.

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