



Orthodox Church of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Free in Christ but Bound to our Neighbor in Need!
November 10, 2024

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery ... For you were called to freedom brethren, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (5:1, 13-14)

The past several weeks have been very difficult, particularly for those of us who live in Pennsylvania or who receive transmissions from Pennsylvania radio or television stations. We have been bombarded by political ads like nowhere else in the country. I was so sick of them that I would automatically put the TV or radio on mute when they came on. The worse part of it was the realization that both sides, the radical left and the radical right, built their ads on the same cracked foundation. On the left was the message that we must be free to have abortions, to change our gender, to marry apart from God’s revelation in Genesis. On the right one lie followed another, with the basic intent to get people to back their case for freedom from government intervention, freedom to spend money the way they wanted, freedom to serve one’s own will. Both perspectives are wrong.

In our country ever since I have been alive I have witnessed the development of these perspectives on freedom. Of course freedom was an important concept in the writing of our constitution, since we were seeking in the 18th century freedom from oppression from a government in the UK that imposed taxes without representation. But as the centuries thereafter developed, the concept of freedom developed away from the concept of freedom from oppression to the concept of unchecked freedom to do what you want, when you want, regardless of the way in which it affects or hurts others. I grew up on the 1950s and 1960s when the whole culture went down the path of hedonism, freedom to have free sex, to take drugs, to do what you want when you want however wrong or harmful it might be. I was personally protected from it only because my parents came from Eastern Europe and were Christian believers, and also because we did not have enough money to spent on things like alcohol or drugs.

Today we begin our reading of Galatians, one of St. Paul's most important letters, concerned primarily with the concept of freedom. Paul's preaching to the Jews of his time was that God does not require us to earn our way into His Kingdom. We must not submit to the yoke of circumcision or nit picking legalistic adherence to the Law. God saves us because He is merciful, period. He bestows upon us His Grace as a free gift. We adhere to the Law not because we want to earn our way into His Kingdom, but because our trust, our faith in Him produces that fruit, the ramification, of love, which fulfills the Law. But freedom for St. Paul means primarily freedom to turn away from ourselves to our neighbor in need. This is what flaws all of the political statements I heard on the part of the candidates running for office, pretty much without exception, except for a few who were not bound by their party affiliations.

Freedom should mean not to do your own thing, to have what you want when you want at any cost to others; freedom is freedom to serve, to aid, to comfort, to care for the sick, the dying, the elderly. Freedom is freedom to service, paradoxically to bind oneself to your neighbor in need.

This is precisely what the political ads missed, in fact they all tried to convince us that their way of selfish behavior was better than the selfish behavior represented by the other side. In our time, no political solution is getting it right. And we understand that no political party or political solution is likely every to get it right! Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

The Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is yet to be fulfilled. It is not of this world. His is an everlasting Kingdom of freedom from selfishness, freedom to serve, freedom to sacrifice for the needs of the other. This, Brothers and Sisters, is what the politics of our time has forgotten, but we must not! To Jesus Christ be all honor and glory forever! Amen!

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