

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 27, 2010
“The Freedom to Love as Jesus Loved Us.”

Next Sunday is our annual 4th of July commemoration of our nation’s sovereign independence.

It’s the time we celebrate the political and governmental freedoms that we have, or, at least, we think we have.

I say, “we think we have” in light of all the debating still going on over the pro-life issues, the marriage amendments, and even the new health reform law.

We’ll have more to say about all that next week.

But today’s Scriptures give us a chance to celebrate our spiritual freedom.

St. Paul writes to the Galatians in the 2nd reading.

They must have been a testy bunch of disciples.

Paul has to tell them to stop sniping and picking at each other.

Otherwise, they’ll end up doing each other in.

Sounds like kids at home on a rainy day, doesn’t it?

Or even married couples who are forever putting each other down, almost as if it were a contest to see who will dominate the relationship.

It happens at work, too, all too frequently. Fellow-employees bad-mouthing each other. Workers never liking or trusting their bosses just because they are the bosses.

St. Paul says flat-out that we are to reject such things as revenge, hostility, and violence.

And in so doing, we become free to practice Christian love in service to one another.

Just think about how true that is, folks.

The less we are enslaved or obsessed with revenge, with getting even, with meanness, or reacting violently, the more energy we have to do positive and caring things for one another.

For example, a group of young Christian people move into a rundown neighborhood and they win the trust their neighbors by doing projects to help them improve their homes and neighborhood.

I experienced this, myself, in the mid 1990's in Erie's mid-city west.

Deacon Marty Eisert had the same experience in Erie's mid-city east, down at Holy Trinity.

Another example, two families decided to tear down the fence between their houses so that they can share life more easily.

Then there's the family who decides to help deliver Christmas food baskets rather than just donating canned goods.

These are just some simple examples of how freed up we become to do good things when we let go of the negatives in daily living, like revenge, hostility and violence.

But there's another aspect to this spiritual freedom that we hear in today's 1st reading, and in the Gospel.

It's called commitment.

That exchange between Elijah and Elisha where Elisha was to become the prophet to succeed Elijah and Elisha wanted first to go back home and bid farewell to his folks was meant to show us that being a disciple requires total commitment.

The same point is made in the Gospel where Jesus turns down the offer from James and John to get even with those nasty Samaritans who rejected Him.

Jesus says no, the City of God is not based on the desire to eliminate enemies, or to exercise power over others, or to destroy nations and peoples.

No, the City of God is based on love, understanding and the desire to forgive and be forgiven.

And true disciples must remain committed to that.

It's a lifetime of challenge, indeed.

But with God's help, one day at a time, we have the freedom to pursue it.

Thank you, and God bless you!