

Homily: 14th Sunday: Cycle B: 2015: Ez 2: 2-5; Ps 123; 2 Corth 12: 7-10; Mk 6:1-6

“Are we using our freedom for good or evil?”

This week-end as a nation we celebrate Independence Day. It is a good time to reflect upon the true meaning of freedom, in light of our Catholic faith.

- 1. Freedom is a gift from God given to us human beings to enable us to act or not act in life.** We humans are not creatures of instinct, but we have the ability to choose. Freedom is the power rooted in reason and will by which we shape our lives. It is meant to be a force for growth and maturity, in truth and goodness. Unfortunately we live in a world today that often sees freedom as license. The difference is: freedom as God intended it is to be used in **the service** of truth, charity and goodness; the world on the other hand thinks freedom means to *be able to do what you want, when you want to do it - whether it is objectively good or bad, true or false.* This is a philosophy of life that is basically **hedonistic**, which means in essence wanting to get as much pleasure from life as possible without any reference to ultimate truth, goodness, beauty, or love which can only be found in God. We see this played out in our public life over the last 50 years as over and over again our government and Supreme Court affirmed the right to do any variety of selfish, disordered, and evil things, *be the right to abortion, to pornography, to homosexual relations and marriage, to oppressing the poor, and taking God out of our schools and public affairs.* It is not a recipe for ultimate happiness. **When we lose sight of God we lose sight of the purpose of human life and the dignity of the human person at all stages and in all forms.** We don't think of the community or common good, or how it affects the youngest members of our society, but simply rather how I can have my “rights” fulfilled without any reference to any responsibility. It is a very childish understanding.
- 2. What are we as followers of Christ called to do in the midst of this selfish understanding of freedom in so many sectors of our culture?** First we need to realize that *doing what you want when you want to do it doesn't lead to happiness or maturity, but in fact to spiritual slavery, misery, and addictions of various*

sorts. It's only by allowing the Lord Jesus to mold us into His image that we come to see what true freedom really is: being a reflection of God in self-giving goodness. St. Paul puts this so nicely in the 2nd reading today when God tells him in the face of many struggles, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.*" Yes we are weak and can misuse our freedom, but God is stronger than our weakness. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us to take on the mind of Christ, to embrace the demanding yet liberating teachings of Christ on how we are to live and what we are to believe in: **objective truth, goodness, love and beauty**. Whether the modern world realizes it or not there is a blueprint given to us by God through the Catholic Church that leads to ultimate happiness. You and I don't have to re-invent the moral and religious wheel, so to speak; to figure it all out ourselves is not a sign of great intelligence, but instead of pride and shortsightedness. What a burden and how depressing it is if you or I with all of our weaknesses and imperfections must figure everything out - instead God in His kindness entices us to live in a spirit of trust of Him, and in love to enter into a living relationship with Himself which alone will set us free from all burdens.

3. **Contrary to what popular culture teaches, the human heart in fact desires more than selfish pleasure, material objects, power, vanity, lust, and control of others.** This is why I became a priest: *I thought as a teenager there has to be more to life than these things I mentioned above; instead I recognized the desire in my heart for ultimate truth, goodness, beauty and love which I discovered can only be found in God and the gift of the Catholic faith.* The more we grow in our relationship with God, the more we grow in authentic human freedom. We come to see that we don't simply want to live, but to have **a reason** for living! As St. Paul says, we are all called to bear the wounds of Christ in our bodies, the wounds of self-giving love, which is our "ticket" to Heaven. The saints show us truly how to use our freedom properly, for service not for selfishness: by growing daily in dying to self, living a life of practical charity expressed in works of goodness, with the foundation of a living relationship with God in daily prayer and acts of penance in reparation for our sins and those of the whole world. God bless you.