

July 1, 2007

## After the Heart of Jesus ...

*Brothers and sisters:  
For freedom Christ set us free;  
so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.*

*For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters.  
But do not use this freedom  
as an opportunity for the flesh;  
rather, serve one another through love.*



These words of St. Paul regarding freedom were written to the Galatians about the year 55 AD. We hear them in this Sunday's second reading. Yet they are so appropriate for the national holiday we celebrate on Wednesday of this week, Independence Day. On the Fourth of July we celebrate the birthday of our nation by retelling the story of the courageous men who signed the Declaration of Independence in seeking freedom from the reign of the King of England. We speak of the freedoms won in the Revolution and declared in our nation's Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The concept of freedom, however, is often misunderstood. Freedom is sometimes used to imply the right to do whatever one wants. However, the secular notion that if we can do something then we have a right to do it is often contrary to the Gospel and the Christian way of life. Christ did not die on the cross so that we might have the freedom to sin, but so that we might be freed from sin. Christ won victory for us so that we might be free to serve God and one another through love. As we celebrate this Sunday as well as Independence Day, let us reflect on how we use the freedoms given us. Do we use them solely to further our own purposes and rationalize our right to do evil? Or do we see the freedom of having the burdens of the worldly ways of viewing things lifted from us enabling us to be generous and kind and work courageously for what is right? In celebrating Independence Day may we know the true meaning of the freedom and independence we celebrate.

Please join us on Wednesday for the 9:00 AM Mass as we thank God for the freedoms we have and the bounty of our nation. There will only be one Mass that day. Enjoy the rest of the day with family and friends as we share life at cookouts and picnics, concerts and fireworks.



Everyday we hear about the violence of war in Iraq. The war has had a particularly harsh effect on the Christian communities there. I am including an inspiring article about Father Ragheed Aziz Ganni, a priest who was murdered outside his church in early June. Please read his moving reflections on Eucharist and his firm commitment to his faith and people in spite of great threats to his life. Martyrdom is an ongoing phenomenon in Iraq. Let us be in prayerful solidarity with the people in Iraq who profess faith in Christ.

I am very happy to announce the selection of four new members of St. Walter Parish Pastoral Council. They are Ray Horn, Judy McGuire, Jim Paoella, and Michael Thomas. We will introduce them in greater detail in a later bulletin. I am grateful to all ten parishioners who expressed interest in serving on the pastoral council and to the discernment committee that worked so hard in the process to appoint these new members. These new members will begin serving at the July 11 pastoral council meeting.

I also gives me joy to announce the selection of our new Director of Pastoral Care. Eileen Searls will begin serving as the new director of pastoral care on July 16. Eileen and her husband, Deacon Ron, have been parishioners of St. Walter Church for over twenty years. She will bring us great parish staff experience in youth ministry, liturgy coordination and bereavement ministry from three parishes she previously served. Eileen, it is great to have you with us!!! I am also grateful to Deacon Rich Foy for his continued service as the interim pastoral care director through July 15.

We also received a newsy letter from Father Charles updating us with his new contact information and ministry in India. This weekend we welcome his bishop, the Most Reverend Gali Bali, bishop of the Diocese of Guntur. Please use our St. Walter Reaches Out Envelopes to make a contribution to support the children of his diocese. These envelopes may be placed in either this week's and next week's regular collections. Of course we should also be offering our prayers for Bishop Gali Bali, Father Charles, and their people.

In Christ, may we experience the true freedom to serve God and one another as we love ...

After the Heart of Jesus!  
*Father John*