

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

ST. NICHOLAS PARISH

From the Pastor's Desk

Next Saturday we observe the National Holiday celebrating the birth of our country: the Fourth of July. We also call this our Independence Day which marks the freedoms we enjoy in our country especially self-governance: freedom from rulers outside our country (England). As we reflect on this holiday celebrating our Independence as a nation it is precisely our country's birthday that marks our Freedom. We have a great country and we enjoy our liberties: we celebrate our Freedom. During these difficult times in our country it is even more important for us to review the true understanding of our freedom. It is very easy to take freedom, our personal liberty for granted and abuse it. Current events confuse freedom with the notion of license; doing what we please. We live in a sinful world and are touched by personal sin. Sin is selfish and that selfishness will always enter the picture. Sin destroys freedom for selfish reasons. Sin is the main factor that taints our lives and society... especially freedom.

We know that the way of selflessness (love) is not easy. It is only by love that we are willing to make sacrifices for those things that are important. From the beginning, God in his great goodness and love for his creation, created a world so that we can flourish. All was for the Human Being: the pinnacle of His creation. Adam and Eve had perfect freedom. They were free to flourish: "*Be fruitful and multiply.*" However, when original sin entered the picture everything became difficult: love means sacrifice, freedom implies the weight of responsibility. Those things that have great value now come about with necessary sacrifices; by the sweat of your brow will you labor, and childbirth will happen with pain. You must sacrifice to bring forth the fruits of the earth. You must sacrifice for children and raising a family. Both have great value. Both imply sacrifices to have and maintain. This only works when we freely choose to make our sacrifices for those things of great value. Only with extreme difficulty does human flourishing happen under oppression. I think of various saints who were imprisoned and oppressed. Their freedom was found in their heart and soul. They flourished in the greatest good: holiness.

Back to the point: we live in a great country where we have freedom. We have this freedom because our forefathers made great sacrifices to overcome oppression from outside and at times inside: foreign and domestic. These sacrifices that were made time and again and were necessary to overcome oppression *so that we can flourish* as a country and as a people. At various times in our history sacrifices were made so that we might enjoy the fruits of *their* sacrifice. Those who have made the sacrifice have a greatest appreciation. Sadly, those who have made no sacrifice have less appreciation for the great gift they have. It is a rather simple fact of human nature. Thus, it is important for all of us who have not had to make a sacrifice for the freedoms we enjoy stopping and invest some time in reflection considering this great gift we enjoy in our country: The God given gift of Freedom. We need heartfelt thanksgiving. But there is so much more to the story...

In our country we cherish our freedom. However, we sometimes think of freedom as the *goal*, and that we merely have freedom for freedom's sake. A quote from the late Pope St. John Paul II from his first encyclical letter fits here... "*Nowadays it is sometimes held, though wrongly, that freedom is an end in itself, that each human being is free when he makes use of freedom as he wishes, and that this must be our aim in the lives of individual and societies. In reality, freedom is a great gift only when we*

know how to use it consciously for everything that is our true good, Christ teaches us that the best use of freedom is charity, which takes concrete form in self-giving and in service." (*Redemptor Hominis*). In the thought of the late Saint, freedom is a means to an end and not the end in itself. The purpose of freedom is for something other than itself but is a means to some greater Good (as opposed for evil). The Good must be objectively good and as opposed to merely a subjective good or personal whim. Freedom is to be used for personal growth in goodness and for the good of others.

It is often thought that freedom is the same thing as personal license. "I am free to do what I want to do, when I want to do it, and how I want." The sole basis for this personal license is personal desire, whim or selfishness. Just because something that is based on personal choice does not mean that it is a good choice. Objective standards of good and evil, moral and immoral, virtue and vice must be present. It is erroneous to think that there is no greater good than personal preference or personal fancy. Freedom can never be used for selfish desires or evil. Thus, it is understood that freedom is intimately connected to morality. This notion of personal license is not true freedom.

This leads to a second quote for the late Pope... "*Freedom negates and destroys itself, and becomes a factor leading to the destruction of others, when it no longer recognizes and respects its essential link with the truth. When freedom, out of a desire to emancipate itself from all forms of tradition and authority, shuts out even the most obvious evidence of an objective and universal truth...then the person ends up by no longer taking as the sole and indisputable point of reference for his own choices the truth about good and evil, but only his subjective and changeable opinion or, indeed, his selfish interest and whim.*" (*Evangelium Vitae*). The late Holy Father says that freedom can destroy itself if it is not rooted in truth (objective norms) and genuine good. If freedom is used for something sinful, immoral or vicious, an individual person can easily become a slave to such evils. Bad habits and addictions all come from personal liberty. When it comes to personal liberty, personal preferences, people who freely choose evil and immoral things ultimately find themselves enslaved to their sinful choices. By becoming enslaved to their vice's, freedom is lost if it was misused and destroyed itself!

Freedom has its limits. Here is the great challenge of freedom: one must be responsible for the use of one's freedom. Being responsible for one's choices and actions has a serious limiting effect when consequences are considered: we must explain the choices we make. This is the thoughtful work of thinking morally. Consideration of consequences is also part of the moral standards forming a society that restricts some of our choices and actions.

This serves to indicate that Freedom is for something. Because of its moral nature freedom is intended as a vehicle or a means to achieve true good: personal and communal. True Freedom must be oriented toward a True Good. As a Christian people we know that the true good is Jesus Christ: God. God gave us Free Will. In freedom we discern our choices in order to orient our lives. We seek fulfillment; perfection; the ultimate good that is happiness. In a word we seek God. The gift from God is intended for us to freely seek and find God.

This is reminiscent of the question we had in the old Baltimore Catechism... "*Why did God make me?*" The answer: "*To know, love and serve Him in this world so that we may be happy with him in the next.*" By virtue of our Free Will we seek to know, love and serve God in this world. This is the highest use of our Free Will. This is the most noble of purposes. This is true

freedom. When Jesus was asked by the rich young man in the Gospel how to achieve eternal life, Jesus indicated that he should follow the commandments (the moral order). Then he invited him to sell everything (freedom from the things that enslave) and simply said to him "Come follow me." This is the invitation to genuine freedom.

Jesus came to set us free. He conquered sin and death. This should tell us what true freedom is. Jesus set us free to live for God so that we may have life and have it to the full. We are not to use our freedom to make ourselves slaves again, as St. Paul reminds us, by choosing evil over good. If we do, we destroy the freedom that has been given to us. Whoever lives in sin is a slave to sin. We must consider this personally and communally.

We have been given a great gift from God. We must appreciate it and use it well. In a sinful world there are many sacrifices needed to keep this precious gift. In a sinful world there has been many sacrifices made so that communities of people may enjoy this God given gift: Freedom. In our country we have freedom from all that would keep us from growing in greater goodness. The highest good is not the government or the state or some institution or some Utopian ideology. These are all temporal and passing. The highest good is always God and His Kingdom. All things should be oriented and supported in achieving and attaining this great Good.

If the Church understands and teaches freedom to achieve genuine good, then it only makes sense that the Church has a very important contribution to make in the public discourse. In a just society it would be a terrible injustice and a huge moral loss to silence the Church in honest public discourse.

Next Saturday, July 4th morning mass will be at 9:00 a.m. I usually do not have Mass on Saturday mornings but since it is a National Holiday, I think it would be a good thing for us to pray as a community with the greatest prayer of the Church: the Mass. I think it is also particularly important for us to pray considering these times of great tension and disharmony. We are the Catholic Church and we have a powerful prayer that can make a difference in our divided society. Let us storm the heavens as God continues to bless us.

Have a great week and God Bless America.
Father Ralko

This week we pray Week I of the Liturgy of the hours.

We pray for those who have died recently:
Elaine Smith

THE PARISH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
FRIDAY, JULY 3. HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY!



SAVE THE DATE



RECONNECT WITH YOUR PARISH FAMILY

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 2020

4:00 P.M.- 11:00 P.M.

behind Bishop Fenwick School

**Join us for a Fun Night of Food,
Fellowship,
Games & Entertainment!!**

Watch the bulletin and stnickparish.org for more details in the coming weeks!

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO MAKE THIS EVENING A SUCCESS! PLEASE CALL THE PARISH OFFICE TO SIGN UP!

Church Support

June 21, 2020	
OFFERTORY	\$8,394.00
EFT	\$4,715.00
Diocesan Tax	\$(770.00)
Fenwick Subsidy	\$(2,635.00)
Rosecrans subsidy	\$(485.00)
Available for Parish Operations	\$9,220.00
Parish Operating Expenses	\$(7,825.00)
Religious Education Expenses	<u>\$(890.00)</u>
Other Income	<u>\$1,855.00</u>
Weekly surplus	\$2,360.00

May God bless you for supporting your parish!

Volunteers Needed! Vacation Bible School will be held the week of Monday, July 27th through July 31st. If you would like to help with this year's Vacation Bible School, please complete and return the form found in this week's bulletin or on-line or call the parish office. Many hands make light work!

"WANTED" Girls Basketball JV Coach

Bishop Rosecrans High School (Zanesville, OH). Is seeking an Assistant Varsity/JV girls' basketball coach. Interested candidates should submit letter of interest, resume, and references to Head Basketball Coach, Vince Tolson at vtolsonus@yahoo

"...whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." MATTHEW 10:38

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confessions are currently by appointment only.

Please do not use the cry room unless absolutely necessary. The room is too small to afford social distancing and should only be used on a very limited basis. Thank you.

With the return to Church, **Baptisms** can now be scheduled. Pre-Jordan classes will be scheduled individually. Please call the office to schedule both Pre-Jordan classes and Baptisms. (740) 453-0597, ext. 14.

Today is the **Peter's Pence Collection**, a worldwide collection that supports the charitable works of Pope Francis. Funds from this collection help victims of war, oppression, and natural disasters. Take this opportunity to join with Pope Francis and be a witness of charity to our suffering brothers and sisters. Please be generous today. For more information, visit www.usccb.org/peters-pence.

ELECTRONIC CONTRIBUTIONS

St. Nicholas Church has a convenient way to make your regular offerings. With our electronic giving program, you can easily set up a recurring giving schedule. It provides a much-needed consistency for our church. If you are currently giving on a weekly basis, you will no longer need to write out 52 checks a year or prepare 52 envelopes. Even when travel, illness or other circumstances prevent you from attending services, our church will continue to receive your contributions on an uninterrupted basis. To become an electronic giver, call or visit the church office or our website: stnickparish.org.

BISHOP ROSECRANS HIGH SCHOOL/ BISHOP FENWICK SCHOOL SCRIP PROGRAM

Gift cards in our SCRIP program at Bishop Rosecrans High School and Bishop Fenwick Schools can still be purchased. As of now, any special SCRIP orders will be ordered on Monday's. SCRIP is still being sold from inventory. If you would like to purchase SCRIP at any time or need information about our program, please email Julie Wagner or call the school office at (740) 452-7504. A time will be arranged for the gift cards to be picked up.

You don't even have to purchase the physical cards!! Go to shopwithscrip.com and set up an account to purchase ecards that will automatically be downloaded to my wallet in your account where the gift cards can be used from your phone or can be printed for future use. If you have already purchased a physical card from our SCRIP program, you can reload the card as many times as you like online and still earn the percentage towards tuition.

What's Happening in Our Parish

MONDAY, June 29, SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Deacon Gene and Mary Lou Staker, wedding anniversary, Church*

TUESDAY, June 30, The First Martyrs of the Holy Roman Church
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Thomas Trott, wedding anniversary, Church*

WEDNESDAY, July 1
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Marguerite Margin, Church*

THURSDAY, July 2
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Michael L. Wilson, Church*

FRIDAY, July 3, St. Thomas, Apostle
Parish Office Closed Today
First Friday Eucharistic Adoration will not be held this month
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Clara Shumate, Church*

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

SATURDAY, July 4
9:00 a.m., Mass: *Osolene Mary Saling, Church*
4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., *Confessions, Church*
5:15 p.m., Mass: *Paul Cherrington, anniversary, Church*

SUNDAY, July 5
8:15 a.m., Mass: *St. Nicholas Parishioners, Church*
10:45 a.m., Mass: *Harold Roessler, anniversary, Church*

Readings for Week of June 29

Mon.	Acts 12:1-11	Mt 16:13-19
Tues.	Acts 12:1-11	Mt 16:13-19
Wed	Am 5:14-15, 21-24	Mt 8:28-34
Thurs.	Am 7:10-17	Mt 9:1-8
Fri.	Eph 2:19-22	Jn 20:24-29
Sat.	Am 9:11-15	Mt 9:14-17
Sun	Zec 9:9-10	Mt 11:25-30

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those serving our country currently and with their loved ones at home. We pray for a safe homecoming and that the world may one day be at peace.

PLEASE REMEMBER ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN YOUR WILL. CALL THE PARISH OFFICE AT 453-0597 FOR MORE DETAILS.

St. Nicholas Parish Office Chapel is open to pray the Rosary on Monday at 2:00 p.m. for anyone who would like to participate.