

“What Freedom Does for us.” – May 21, 2017  
by Wayne J. Schneider – Cum Sancto Spiritu

## “What Freedom Does for Us.”

Galatians 5:1, 13-18 and St. Luke 22:24-27

Dag Hammarskjold once said: *“The road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.”* In the letter to the Galatians, St. Paul teaches that believers have been called to freedom. This liberation is not for selfish ends; rather, for the possibility of serving others.

St. Paul reminds us the God’s word is a flawless mirror of freedom. I believe that one of the missions of the Holy Scriptures is to challenge us with ourselves, with our truth. And this confrontation will hopefully produce a change in our life, leading to the majestic truth that Jesus calls, *“The Reign of God.”* Richard Rohr says, *“It seems to me that only after we’ve changed our lives does the Gospel promise comfort. In my opinion, the great danger facing prosperous Christians is that we have exactly reversed this process.”* And Rohr says that’s the reason our religion is so schizophrenic.

The apostle makes it clear what freedom and its obligations are. Liberty in Jesus is not an entrée into self-indulgence. Instead, freedom in Jesus is the practice of loving service and a genuine mark of *“Followers of the Way.”*

Hedonism, or pleasure-seeking, is a fitting description of our society. Lucy, from the Peanuts comic strip, was sometimes used to illustrate a self-indulgent philosophy. Linus is reading a book to Lucy: *“It says here that the world revolves around the sun once a year.”* Lucy replies, *“The world revolves around the sun? Are you sure? I thought it revolved around me.”* Strangely enough, this opinion is sometimes found in the church.

If you visit a bookstore or surf on the net, you will find a plethora of books promising to make you happy. And, unfortunately, many media preachers will tell

you that God's only purpose is to make you happy and wealthy.

We, those who are guided by the *"Fruit of the Spirit,"* understand that contentment and completeness are never found in selfishness, but through serving others. Jesus tells his disciples that genuine significance does not come from your occupation or position, only by loving ministry. In our Gospel lesson Jesus says, *"I am among you as one who serves"* (St. Luke 22:27). Our testimony, our declaration of belief, is seen in our action. If our internal faith does not translate into action, perhaps we never really understood what faith is. Faith leaves evidence behind.

When I was with the Free Methodists, a pastor friend who officiated at our wedding, the Rev'd Paul Kugler, was serving with the Salvation Army in Garden Grove, CA. He invited me to give the invocation at a dinner given to honor his years of service. The key-note speaker was a general of the Salvation Army who began his talk by explaining what his uniform means.

He said there are only two things he wanted to point out: two brass buttons. Both had the letter "S" on them. The right one, he said stood for salvation; the left one for service. He said these two buttons tell the world that he had been saved for only one purpose: to serve.

Then he seriously said, *"Quite frankly, folks, I grow very weary of some of my Christian brothers and sisters who are always talking about the brass button on the right, and do not have a clue what the button on the left is all about."*

A gentle reminder that we have been liberated by Jesus to serve people in need. We cannot do this if we serve only ourselves. *"A Follower of the Way,"* whose soul is based on the knowledge of God and self, whose life is full of humility and compassion, produces fruit.

Sylvia and I enjoy watching the television program, "Sixty Minutes." Awhile ago, they carried the story of a Catholic Nun named Sister Emmanuel. Where most people would think of retiring to New Mexico or Arizona in the winter, and traveling

during the summer, Sister Emmanuel fell on her knees and prayed that God would call her to the most hopeless place on earth. As my mother was want to say, *“Be careful what you pray for.”* This prayer was answered, and in the interview, we learned that this elderly French nun was serving God in the *“City of Garbage,”* a ghetto in Egypt.

Each of her days began at 4:30 am where she worked among the ‘untouchables.’ At 9:00 am she would teach both Christian and Muslim children to read and write. She collaborated with the Egyptian government to provide better housing. How appropriate that her name is Emmanuel, *“God with us.”*

Diane Sawyer, who led the interview, asked Sister Emmanuel if there was a reward for her service. The nun pointed to a picture on the wall of angels dancing hand-in-hand in the Kingdom. *“One of these days,” said Sister Emmanuel, “they will offer me their hand, and I will dance in the kingdom of heaven with them.”*

I believe that Sister Emmanuel, God’s servant who lived the *“Fruit of the Spirit”* with those in need, is dancing her heart out. Are you dancing yet? Alleluia. Amen.