

July 4, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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A REFLECTION ON FREEDOM

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

Reflection

Today we celebrate the birth of our nation, the United States of America. The name alone conjures an image that “we the people” are in this union together, freely working for the good of all people who call this fair land home. As Americans, we assume that freedom is our God-given right and blessing.

Freedom is defined by Merriam Webster as *the quality or state of being free, such as: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action. liberation from slavery or from the power of another.* Living freedom well necessitates formation in essential values that shape and inform one’s conscious living. An informed conscience, emotional intelligence, and a value-based standard of behavior that reverences the dignity of all of creation and people inform one’s living in freedom. Freedom -- while residing in an individual -- is always exercised communally.

As the old song states, “Freedom isn’t free.” Rather, it comes with responsibility

and accountability. Freedom is more complicated than being able to do whatever we want. Taken too far, that approach would lead to dangerous anarchy -- every person for themselves! Certainly, freedom can mean the right to do, think, believe, speak, worship, gather, or act as one pleases, but only until your choices start to infringe on another person's freedoms.

From what I can gather, the Sacred Scriptures of various traditions teach the blessing and constraint of authentic freedom. The prophets, Jesus, heroes, and those we call saints lived their lives among a community of believers and non-believers. Their stories demonstrate these freedoms well lived -- with an eye to the good of all. All too often, the demise of these witnesses demonstrates the destructive power of those who clung to power over others, self-centered authority, excessive protection of possessions, and ego fixation or un-holy desires that worked to steal freedom from good people.

It is the 4th of July! It seems that our current reality demonstrates that our national understanding and living of freedom could use an attitude adjustment. You and I can teach and witness by our lives consciously lived -- and, hopefully, influence the next generations. What do you think?



Father and son walk a wooded path together
Photo by Michelle DeLisle

For Pondering

- What is your understanding of freedom?
- What life experiences have helped hone your understanding of authentic

freedom?

- Where may shift be needed for a healthier and holier sense of freedom?

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