



# Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat and Spirituality Center

3989 South Moon Drive  
Venice, FL 34292

941-486-0233  
www.olph-retreat.org

## The Freedom We Celebrate

On July 4, we celebrate 245 years of American freedom. Would you believe me if I told you that one of the biggest problems facing our great nation is that we have bought into a false idea of what *freedom* is?

For many people today, freedom is *the power to do whatever you choose to do, whenever you choose to do it*. Many postpone or even forego marriage because they believe they will lose their freedom. If you are single, they say, you are “free,” but if you marry, you are restricted to one person. And if you do choose to marry, why shouldn’t you be “free” to marry someone of your own sex?

Likewise, the phrase “reproductive freedom” has become part of common language. If you defend the unborn, or try to make abortions less available, you are said to be “anti-choice”—an enemy of freedom. The pro-abortion slogan “Keep your laws off my body” reflects the idea that each person is a law unto themselves, and that anyone who says otherwise is trying to restrict freedom. More recently, this freedom is said to include a person’s ability to be identified as one gender even though every cell in their body says that they are the other.

There is another, truer definition of freedom that we find in St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians: *“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. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love”* (Gal 5:1). St. Paul draws here from his own life experience. There had been a time when he was a slave to sin and to his passions, including his own anger, even to the point of violently persecuting Christians in the name of God.

Having had his experience on the road to Damascus, Paul knows that he is no longer a slave. Christ has died for him and set him *free*. He might still be tempted toward excessive anger, but because Christ is now living in him, he has the power to channel that energy into a self-sacrificing love for the Church. Paul now understands what true freedom is—not the ability to do whatever he wants, but the *privilege and the power to choose what is truly good*.

Our founding fathers also understood that true freedom means choosing well and not simply doing whatever we choose. In his letter to his cousin Zabdiel Adams in June 1776, John Adams said, “The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our people, in a greater measure than they have it now, they may change their rulers, and the forms of government, but they will not obtain a lasting liberty.” In his speech at the Virginia Ratifying Convention in 1788, James Madison asked, “Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation. No theoretical checks—no form of government can render us secure.”

We will be hearing much about freedom during these days. Let’s remember what freedom is not: the ability to do whatever we choose to do, whenever we choose to do it. And let’s not forget what true freedom is: the power and the privilege to choose what is truly good. It is for this freedom that Christ has set us free.

In Christ and Our Lady of Perpetual Help,

*Rev. Mark S. Yavarone, OMV*

Rev. Mark S. Yavarone, OMV