

## **The Meaning of Freedom**

*By Deacon Tim Sullivan*

A big challenge for all of us these days, and especially for parents, is to understand and promote the meaning of authentic freedom.

Unfortunately, the modern understanding of freedom is the ability to do anything we want any time we want. This contemporary understanding of freedom has become so extreme that now freedom extends to attitudes and behaviors that are based solely on feelings and have little, if any, reason or logic behind them.

For the modern person, moral decision making is like shopping at the grocery store, with the shelves filled with different options, any one of which can be chosen. In resolving the same issue, the person might choose one option one time and a completely opposite, inconsistent option another time. Logic and consistency have become irrelevant.

What is so weird about this approach to freedom is that it results not in freedom but in slavery. The person who makes feelings-based decisions will inevitably choose pleasure over a higher good and then become dependent upon and maybe even addicted to the chosen pleasure, whether it be drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling or some other object or behavior that used to be considered a vice.

Genuine freedom is only possible when a person has enough self-control to reject what leads to dependency and addiction and to choose what is objectively good for him or her. Genuine freedom is impossible without self-discipline. Otherwise, we are no different from animals.

John Adams, one of our founding fathers, once wrote that freedom in our democracy was intended to create the conditions in which virtue would flourish. That principle needs to be resurrected.

Freedom and responsibility go together, and they both exist to serve what is objectively true and good. As Jesus said in John 8:32, *“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free...Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.”*