

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Freedom versus Liberty**    Fourth Week in Ordinary Time    Tuesday, February 5, 2019  
**Heb 12:1-4;**    Mk 5:21-43    St. Agatha, virgin and martyr    (One abides in truth; the other does not. The martyr knows the difference.)

**“In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.”**

This is from the Letter to the Hebrews. On this Memorial of St. Agatha it is important that we remind the Christian faithful that **the gospel of Jesus Christ has been transplanted over centuries by the blood of martyrs**; the greatest century of martyrdom was actually the twentieth. **This great struggle continues between the human will and the will of God**, and the price is the blood of martyrs, starting first of all with the martyrdom of Jesus Christ himself on the cross.

Now it would do us some good to **reflect on the difference between the Christian idea of freedom and the modern secular idea of liberty; therein lies the struggle itself**. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus says, **“Truth that shall make you free.”** Martyrs are martyrs precisely because **they have found the truth, and they have become freed to die**. They do not mind; in fact they may even prefer it because, as Meister Eckhart points out, **it is in darkness that we can perceive the light best**. So in the darkness of suffering, imprisonment, and even death, the light shines more brilliantly; and that is the freedom afforded by the truth.

Now let’s compare the secular idea of liberty. “Give me liberty or give me death.” What is that about, the same thing? Oh no, not at all. **Liberty is simply the freedom**, if you want to use that word, the right, if you want to use that word, **the capacity to do whatever one wants**. Well whatever one wants already has to have some good in it. Nobody wants what’s not good; everyone wants the good. But **not all good is really, truly good**; and you can tell that by looking around at the world. Many people desire good that is really bad. First of all it’s really bad for other people. Just look at countries, how certain groups in countries desire a good for themselves, for their own, but that’s bad for everyone else. That’s a macroscopic example. Then there are microscopic

examples in each individual life, where something looks good, but isn't really good in the long run; it's bad.

The difference between freedom in the Christian sense and liberty is that freedom is filtered by the truth. **Freedom is about doing what is really good** and desiring what is really good as opposed to what is apparently good or even falsely good, **whereas liberty does not distinguish.** Liberty is indiscriminate: "No one is going to tell me." Therein lies the great struggle in human life between freedom and liberty. **One abides in truth; the other does not. The martyr knows the difference.**