

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY
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*Submitted 08/15/07 to the op-ed section of the
Surry Messenger, a new newspaper in Mount Airy, NC*

These United States are blessed to have the greatest amount of freedom in the history of mankind. The question is, do we take these freedoms for granted, do we have a cavalier attitude about them, and do we regard them as a license to do anything we choose, even if, while being legal, is a detriment to our civic life?

These freedoms were paid and are being paid for by the blood of Americans who went to war defending our nation and our way of life. If you drive by a national cemetery, you will see the many tombstones that mark the graves of the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice. That should give each of us pause as we ponder what those freedoms mean and how best to use them in a responsible manner.

It sometimes takes an observation from outside our nation to remind us of how precious these freedoms are. After all, we have millions of people who would like to live in our nation and enjoy our freedoms and the bountiful economic opportunities they bring. One such observation was made by the late Pope John Paul II in Baltimore in a 1995 sermon. He referenced Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, "whether a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal could long endure." That, the pope said, was a question for every generation of Americans. For a "democracy cannot be sustained without a shared commitment to certain moral truths about the human person and human community." All Americans, he concluded, must remember that "freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought."

His observations came as a result of his personal experiences in his native Poland. First, it was the Nazis who invaded his country at the start of World War II and tried to wipe out Polish culture and history. Following that war came the partition of Europe by the communists and their oppression of the Polish people, culture, religious Christian heritage and institutions.

Yes, our freedoms are precious and we need to do all we can in our communities to preserve them and pass them to future generations.

We can do that in a number of different ways and all of us need to participate.

- Students need to realize that learning is a precious gift. You need to strive to do the very best you can to make the highest grades you can. You need to have a love of learning, the highest respect for your teachers, and respect for your classmates. You need to encourage one another in your studies. If a classmate stumbles pick

them up and give encouragement to do better. You may stumble, too, and need an encouraging word.

And when you graduate and go into the community with your degree, use your education to help your community and the marvelous gifts you have been given. That helps sustain freedom.

- If you are in business, strive to conduct it morally and ethically. Use your business to help the community. That sustains freedom.

Volunteer your time, helping in the community. When you see a need, go meet it and fill it. That sustains freedom.

- Finally, go to church every week and thank God for the freedoms He has given us. Show your love of freedom through the work you do with and through your congregation.

Alexis De Tocqueville, a French diplomat and political scientist who came to America in 1831 and later wrote about his visit in Democracy in America. He had this to say: “I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there. In the fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there. In her rich mines and her vast world commerce and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits, aflame with righteousness, did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

If we do all these things, then our values and heritage will live on and then freedom’s lamp will burn brightly for future.

That is using our freedoms responsibly.