

## **SERMON: A Democracy Deserved?**

**Right or wrong the fact remains that since 911 we have focused our economy and our energies on the invasion of Iraq. The proposed changeover to democracy has been a complete disaster, but to be expected as the specific details of how the transition process was to take place was apparently not a priority. We assumed that everyone wants a democracy; everyone wants to live in a free country just like ours, just like us, but what has happened and the way it happened is not going to work as we had envisioned. Upon the initial invasion and even now, the Iraqi people did not rise up as a nation and fight vehemently for the democratic life; we attempted to simply give it to them. The reasons for their lack of involvement are secondary, the point is we imposed it upon them, unprepared and without warning, whether they wanted it or not.**

**I am particularly disturbed about how this happened for a number of reasons, but the most glaring comes from our own national history, in particular. For example, the way we went about freeing the slaves. In one swift ordinance through a genuine sense of justice and compassion, Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. Just like that. Our political ancestors patted themselves on the back and expected our wonderful gift to be embraced. It never occurred to the fathers of our country that giving the gift freedom without a practiced understanding of what is needed and required to live successfully in a democracy is imperative to its success. Among the slaves that act of kindness for many, became a nightmare. Many chose to remain with their masters, others fled the plantations, with no training or education or any marketable skills for living in the aftermath of that edict. They were expected to rejoice and to survive without the tools necessary to live in a very prejudiced white mans world. To this day we are still experiencing the long range effects of the aftermath of slavery. Even more importantly our definition of freedom for too many still means, white, Christian, employed and economically self sufficient.**

**We know where it went from there and we are doing it again.**

**Are we simply ignoring that valuable experience from our own history or have our historical memories become so faded and irrelevant that they no longer have value?**

**I do not believe that our forefathers and mothers who created our Bill of Rights had any idea where this would all lead in modern culture. Living in a democracy comes with a caveat of personal responsibility which has obviously become a stumbling block to the true intent of what freedom in a democracy actually entails.**

**There are times when I wonder if we may have become too lax and comfortable and taken our rights a bit too far, and granted our selves too many undeserved liberties at the cost of pure common sense which we have all too often ceased to practice as a necessary part of maintaining a true democracy. Merely giving the gift of freedom without a thorough understanding of our responsibility to preserve its intent seriously alters its function in society.**

**For example, we have become very adept at convoluting the meaning of the Bill of Rights to suit our own inattention to personal responsibility. In an all too common occurrences; how about the teenager who ate at McDonalds, everyday, and suddenly found himself seriously overweight? Our process of “justice” allowed him to take McDonalds to court because he ate too much food that was fattening and you know what, he claimed that they didn’t tell him that was going to happen, so in his mind they should pay for his own lack of self care.**

**Or the woman who placed her steaming hot coffee between her legs while driving and seriously burned herself when it spilled. She claimed they should not have made it so hot! Burger King was the recipient of that lawsuit. She did win the lawsuit and needless to say, now all cups carry a warning! I think that maybe that conversely, the warning should have been tattooed on her thighs!**

**You may have heard about the man whose children climbed the fence of a rental car agency and vandalized many of the vehicles. He blamed the rental car agency for his kid's delinquent behavior because the agency had left the keys in the cars.**

**This is not a viable example of a proper defense of our individual rights! Stupidity will not protect us! Common sense might. Sadly the above examples are no longer the exception to the rule. Such cases are becoming more and more commonplace and prevalent in our courts as we continue to cater to every conceivable and sometimes absurd definition of our personal rights and freedoms. I wonder at times how many Americans really deserve to live in a democracy.**

**My favorite response to this absurdity was peeled off a new doormat I purchased several years ago. The manufacturer was talking no chances with our propensity to sue when the mistakes are largely our own. Tongue in cheek it reads as follows:**

**If we were to bring back to life the authors of our Bill of Rights even for one day, I suspect they would be appalled at how we have interpreted their intent.**

**I do not believe that they anticipated the right to a speedy trial and the assurance of a jury of ones peers to mean a self inflicted burned thigh or**

gluttony at its worst, as a violation of ones rights, rather a serious absence of common sense. I don't think they interpreted the meaning of a freedom of religion as a tool of government by using ones faith to chastise and undermine the beliefs of others, or peddling pornography to kids, or creating video games that glorify war and violence as an example of Freedom of Speech. The authors of the right to bear arms never anticipated a child using an AK-7 an oozie or an M1 to annihilate their classmates in school.

Obviously the Bill of Rights, interpreted in this century has taken on a different tenor from the time it was ratified in 1791 nearly 300 years ago.

However, our obligation to their intent has not changed, and requires every individual to examine the parameters of their intent, rather than conjuring the ways we can get around them for our own personal benefit.

Until we can re-learn how to value and treasure our freedoms again, so well fought for by our ancestors, we have no right to expect other nations to willingly embrace the errors of our ways.

We do wish for others in oppressed lands to know our freedoms as we have. To experience what it is like to go about our daily lives pursuing our individual choices, traveling as we please, educating ourselves in the fields of our talents and to choosing where we live. When we finally do explain our democratic life the Iraqi people, to others and to ourselves more carefully, we may need to take a closer look at the implied components that do make it work, that have become lost and forgotten in our sometimes ridiculous and selfish quest for total freedom from any responsibility for our choices. It begins with telling the truth to ourselves and to our young that, we are responsible for a fair and just application of our freedoms through our own actions. It does mean learning about our past and the mistakes we have made as applied to the present, for today our lack of insight is all too familiar in its repetition.

**So I would like to reiterate a few observations, as we prepare ourselves to present democracy at its best to a besieged country coming directly out of slavery.**

**For freedom to work it has be first understood, taught, and accepted as a goal both individually and as a nation. The foolishness that has made a mockery of the Bill of Rights in this country has to be stopped with some serious soul searching, teaching and especially truth telling.**

**Why in this land of abundant communication is there anyone who doesn't know that eating too much junk food makes us fat. Furthermore, errors of personal responsibility should be simply dismissed or thrown out of court. Sometimes it is a rude awakening to discover that others are not always responsible for our bad choices.**

**Citizens in countries we have targeted as prime candidates for our empire of democratic living, often do not have a clear idea of how democracy is supposed to work. Due to the political voice of the day, many do not realize that all Americans are not Christian, and that Jesus is not our national prophet. There are some in this country who need reminders of that fact. Many do not understand that some Americans are very poor and go to bed hungry and far too many children grow up without parental guidance, or that not all citizens even bother to vote.**

**Giving the gift of freedom without a practiced understanding of what is required of us to live in a democracy is imperative to its growth success.**

**And finally, there are "good Americans" who do not always seem to understand that freedom and the democratic process is granted to all Americans even those whose religion, culture, way of life and love, are different from our own.**

**On Tuesday as we all head to the polls, we do place a great deal of responsibility on our incoming leadership to correct our national wrongs, and to his administration may we grant him and ourselves no excuses, disclaimers, warranties, or special conditions for that premise always remain a critical part of our commitment to the expectations of a**

**Democracy Deserved.**

**So be it**

**Amen**

**Rev. Holly Baylies ©  
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