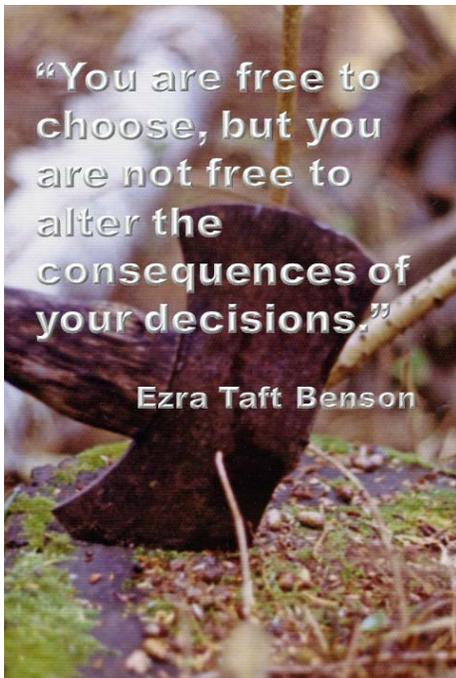




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## Choice and Responsibility

Last Sunday, the homily in Church was about choice and responsibility. The essence was that we are all responsible for society and the choices made for the common good. The homily dealt with the need to take responsibility for the immigrants from Syria, South America, and Mexico.

Affinity Systems LLC, a project management company, developed materials to train ERP selection and project improvement teams. Decision-making was one of those classes. For me, the sermon raised some troubling issues about choices and responsibility.

Values

The core values for America are based on freedom (liberty) for all, individual rights, equality, self-government, diversity, and unity. Other values derive from the Old and New Testaments such as honesty, trust, integrity, responsibility, humility, frugality, and love of God. The obligation to each other, and belief that all are equal in God's eyes, are foundational.

Our increasingly secular society reinterprets choice to be obligation, and converts the concept of privilege and opportunity to "rights."

We covered the term "for the common (greater) good" in the June 2014, Issue 12 edition of The Focused Fire Newsletter, titled "Trust." For purposes of perspective, however, the core issue is who is deciding the meaning of "for the greater good" and what is our obligation to support these arbitrary objectives?

### **Political correctness**

Political correctness is a state imposed on us by others, who want to control what we do, say, and feel. The expectation is that our decisions and actions will factor in this false narrative, and that individuals are responsible for any violation. Political correctness uses forced actions to legislate civility. It confuses freedom for individuals with personal improprieties. When forced to conform to artificial standards, we become slaves to the will of the perpetrators. When everyone acts and thinks the same way, it kills the diversity of ideas and opportunities, precisely the opposite effect of the one needed for a free society.

Political correctness would have universal application if it had value. If a certain word or phrase is politically incorrect for one demographic, the rule should have equal application for all. It currently does not. I would immediately be branded as raciest by using words contained in RAP music, yet words directed towards other races are tolerated as "comedy, music, or art." While some may protest this double standard, it is free speech, and protected.

Proponents of political correctness value control more than the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The promotion of political correctness could not survive without these freedoms. The dystopian culture political correctness promotes would not allow political correctness itself.

Free speech is the right of a free people, and as a vet, I think it is worth fighting for. There are consequences for deciding to use hurtful language, and users should be accountable for poor social choices. Perhaps the biggest issue with political correctness is that political parties scream for civility, while bashing those who oppose them, then proposing limits on what the other party says.

It may sound contradictory, but when legitimate grievances are ignored, there must be a provision for public discourse. The Civil Rights movement was certainly justified and its cause, equality, was a demand to apply the provisions of the Constitution to every citizen. Other situations, such as "safe space" and the "campus reform" are the product of spoiled children. Universities exist to provide higher education, and to function as catalysts for ideas and positive change in society. That means maximizing diversity and the exchange of ideas, not shutting off dialogue.

Political correctness will potentially create an oxymoron, weakening the university system by shifting dollars towards a greater need. Public dollars spent on spoiled children, redirected towards the tech schools, could potentially offer greater opportunities to demographics trapped in poor circumstances. The workplace is looking for somewhere between eight and twelve million workers. Most will be graduates from tech schools with advanced science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) training.

Most people get their training for political correctness in kindergarten, and that is where it belongs. We are not bound to make decisions on the arbitrary standards of others when the Constitution provides the free speech standard, and the Bible provides the blueprint for civil behavior.

There are terms and actions that are demeaning and/or harmful to others. The only reason people use them is for belittling or visiting pain on another person or demographic. The following photograph communicates an important lesson.



**Don't laugh at me  
Don't call me names  
Don't get your pleasure from my pain  
In God's eyes we're all the same  
Someday we'll all have perfect wings  
Don't laugh at me**

Steve Seskin and Allen Shamblin

Our politically correct society rewards victims and punishes success. Our government and press use every opportunity to fractionalize demographics, playing them off for economic or political gain.

Political correctness is a product, a reflection of larger circumstances.

In 2008 and 2012, the majority of the voters made a decision and elected President Obama, who in turn appointed Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State. This begs the question from the homily.

Do these voters share responsibility for the shortfall in the Affordable Health Care Act? Do they share responsibility for the use of improper and inadequate statistics to misrepresent the state of the economy, or the nineteen trillion dollar national debt? Are they responsible for the whitewash of Fast and Furious? Are they culpable for the further loss of jobs among young black people? All of these have occurred on Presidents Obama's watch. Of course, some remain oblivious to the facts, ignoring that problems exist.

The Iraq and Afghanistan war, and the economic meltdown, occurred on President Bush's watch. While he took responsibility, the legacy continues to drain us emotionally, politically, and economically.

An issue closer to the homily is the current massive migration of people across the Middle East. Last year Latinos from many countries flooded the United States. Both were the result of decisions made by our government over two administrations. Without the war in Iraq, there might not be an ISIS, but the results are unknowable. If we had not withdrawn so sharply from Iraq, ISIS would probably not have gained power. President Obama did not enforce the immigration laws, enabling the exodus from Latin America. The question is, are supporters of President Obama and his policies responsible for the mass migrations and for doing something to help these people? As responsible citizens and members of society, we must support and take action to help those unfairly victimized by circumstances or lack of opportunity. Policy makers, however, need to be accountable for poor decisions.

Addressing the core question, we are not responsible for the decisions and actions of others. We are responsible for our decisions and actions, regardless of reasons or circumstances, and accountable for the consequences.

My value system drives decision-making. I believe in God, family, and the American system. God created all people equally, but not equal opportunities. It is society's job to enable opportunities for everyone to achieve their potential.

We have the right to offend others, but civil dialogue defines intelligence, and deliberately offending others displays ignorance. Applied intelligence leads to problem definition, solutions, and a search for the mutual accommodation and advancement of everyone. The greater good is then defined as the positive pursuit of implementable solutions to societal issues. For those who have forgotten, this is the essence of democracy.

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***Freedom  
And  
Opportunity***

**Stop  
Redistributing  
and Downsizing**

***America***

***Focused Fire Newsletter  
Essays***

***Wayne L Staley***