Dear People Whom God Loves,

FREEDOM

Don’t we long to be free? Don’t we want to choose our own path? Don’t we long to do what we want to do? I wanted to be free to write this little essay.

I am suggesting that these freedoms are not as free as we might think.

We also might believe that freedom means that I am free to choose what is good and that I am free to choose what is bad.

There is truth in all of these examples. I do believe that we will be able to put all of these freedoms in proper perspective when we believe that God is total love. This is the same as saying that God is total freedom and that God is total goodness.

Because God is totally free, God can only choose what is good. At first this might seem like a lack of total freedom, but on reflection, I don’t think that it is. Let us look at us humans to make some sense of this.

We humans can choose to sin. I think of sin as our choice to knowingly and willingly act unlovingly by causing harm. When we look at ourselves clearly, we can see that there are urges or drives within us and also pressures from outside of us that are pulling us to choose to sin.

These urges and pressures make it more difficult to choose what is loving. As we continue to choose unloving behaviors, our freedom to choose lovingly is gradually diminished. We become less and less free. This is sometimes called slavery to sin. To the degree that we are enslaved we are not free.

Since God is infinite love, freedom, and goodness, there is nothing pulling God toward sin. God is completely free because there is nothing hindering God from always choosing what is good. I see the words love, freedom, and goodness pointing to the same reality.

When we look at our world today and our world throughout the centuries of history, we see a multitude of terrible, harmful choices. We even see the pleasure and delight that some people received from inflicting pain and suffering on their fellow human beings. This could make us despair. We can have hope however when we think of Grace. Recall the old theological phrase “Grace presupposes and perfects nature.”

Grace is God (Love, Freedom, Goodness) working in us humans to draw us into deeper love, freedom, and goodness. This is why we call God savior and Jesus savior. Savior is a good word because we could never arrive at this state of love, freedom, and goodness by our own willpower. We call this grace because it is a gift.

However, we do have a part. Because God respects our freedom, we must have some willingness to cooperate and allow grace to heal our sins; and as we heal, to allow grace to pass through us to others. Grace is for everyone because everyone is a beloved daughter or son of God. In some mysterious way God even helps us do our small but essential part. I think that this was what Thomas Aquinas was saying with this phrase – God moves us freely.

Our spiritual journey is a journey into even deeper freedom that will be complete only when we share in the resurrection of Jesus.

Smile, God Loves You

Father Clay