

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

There is a story written by a Science Fiction author back in the 1960s.* The story is set in the not so distant future, and although it is nearly 50 years old, it could still reflect a not so distant future.

In the story, a couple are watching the Olympics on television, and the event is pairs figure-skating. As the story unfolds, the description of the participants begins to unveil what is happening. The man and woman are both wearing masks. And the man wears heavy chains, while the woman is blindfolded.

What is going on?

The narrative begins to explain that the current interpretation of “all men are created equal” is that the state is required to even things out. Smart people are denied schooling, athletic people are burdened with weights, and beautiful people wear masks.

At one point the couple throw off the chains, masks, and blindfolds and begin to execute a marvelous routine. They are both extremely handsome examples of athletic beauty.

As the story ends, they are gunned down by the police for violating the equality that has been legislated, and is enforced with strict penalties.

In the first reading, St. Paul speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are all equal in the eyes of God, yes. But as the Scripture continues, “some people God has designated in the Church to be ...” and then goes on to describe the various roles in the Church as set forth by God.

Is this fair? Is this some sort of divine oppression?

You see, in our own time, freedom has been distorted in a way that equality was distorted in the Science Fiction story. God does not limit freedom; rather God wills our freedom. If our notion of freedom is informed by society, it will be distorted. It is important for us as Christians to let our idea of freedom be informed by the Holy Spirit.

If we refuse the gift of God, we limit ourselves. If we refuse the grace of God, we try to make it on our own. This is not the life of Christians.

St. Paul ends with, “strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts ...” by which he means love.

Let us pray that we may be open to receive the gifts that God has ordained for us, and realize our true freedom in Jesus Christ as sons and daughters of a loving Father, filled with the Holy Spirit.

* Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron,” 1961.