The Four Freedoms

Highlights:
We encourage our Scouts to appreciate their freedoms
We enable our Scouts to understand and appreciate the Four Freedoms, what inspreid them, and what part they play in our Scouts' lives

Our Scout Programs instill in our Scouts the importance of essential human freedoms. We value these freedoms so much, our Scouts choose, organize, and lead their own meetings, programs, and activities. We instill in our Scouts the importance of responsible citizenship. Our Scouts acquire knowledge of the "four freedoms", what inspired them, and the part they play in our Scouts' lives.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our 32nd president, gave his speech about four freedoms, the world was in a state of turmoil. The opposition was advancing across Western Europe, setting up a tyrannical regime of fear, and threatening the freedom and the very lives of millions of people.

President Roosevelt gave an impassioned speech before Congress in which he affirmed the freedoms all mankind should have. At the time, Norman Rockwell, the famous American painter, was listening to the speech and wishing he could do something to help. Rockwell decided to depict each freedom in a separate painting. He used his "true to life" style to capture moments in America which reflected the importance of each freedom so that Americans could appreciate how lucky we were to have those freedoms, and how difficult life is for anyone without them. Rockwell petitioned the government to create the paintings for them, but he was refused. In 1943, after America became involved in World War II, his paintings were published in the Saturday Evening Post, each with an accompanying article. Seeing the instant popularity of the images, the government changed its mind and the Office of War Information issued a series of posters of the images in order to encourage purchasing war bonds.

Today, Rockwell's images of the Four Freedoms are among the most popular and best known images from the World War II era. Each illustrates a specific American value from President Roosevelt's speech.

In the future days which we seek to make secure, we look
forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. -- FDR

Freedom of Speech

The first is freedom of speech and expression
-- everywhere in the world. -- FDR

Rockwell created this painting after recalling a recent town meeting in Arlington, Vermont where he lived. A neighbor of his, Jim Edgerton, stood up at a town meeting and expressed an unpopular opinion, which no on present agreed with.

The figure in the center is an American working man, in simple clothes. He is shown standing up, expressing himself, and all eyes are on the speaker. It is obvious in the painting that others disagree with them. Some look a little annoyed. But the most important aspect of the painting is that no one interrupts the speaker or questions his right to express himself. The ability to stand up at a meeting and say something should not be taken for granted, particularly in America. Rockwell makes the point that everyone should have such a freedom.

In our Scout Programs, we instill in our Scouts the importance of making sure every Scout has the opportunity to express themselves and that their opinions are valued. Democracy cannot exist unless the people are heard from, and in the case of our Scout Programs, our Scouts are the people. The responsibility of all our Scouts to make sure every Scout's voice is fairly heard.

Freedom of Worship

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way -- everywhere in the world.-- FDR

Rockwell said this was the most difficult of all the pictures to make. He wanted to avoid stereotypes while still showing diverse people worshipping in a diverse way. Ultimately, Rockwell settled on close-ups many faces, of various races, worshipping in various ways. Some have rosaries and other items, some do not. Some have hands folded, some do not. Some have their eyes closed, some open.

The picture shows eight people, four men and four women, and they are bathed in a soft golden light coming from the left side of the canvas. It is through the faces of those worshipping that he meant to remind Americans that each has the ability to worship as they see fit and that all should have the same freedom.

Our Scout Programs honor the freedom of each of our Scouts to worship as they choose. Time is allocated for our Scouts of faith to have the opportunity to fulfill their religious responsibilities. We offer our Scouts the opportunity to participate in the Religious Recognition Program, or alternatively, the Ethics Recognition Program.

Freedom from Want

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants -- everywhere in the world.-- FDR

This picture, also known as Thanksgiving Dinner, is one of Rockwell's most beloved images.

The scene pictured cannot help but make a person hungry, and the young people around the table are chatting happily. The picture is one of anticipation as if those in the picture cannot wait to get some turkey. The man in the lower right hand corner looks at us in the audience as if asking us to pull up a chair and join them.

Our Scout Programs instill in our Scouts the importance of service to the greater community. We do not count hours when our Scouts are participating in service to the greater community because we want our Scouts to give us much time as they can. It is far more important what our Scouts' hearts say than what their watches say. We encourage our Scouts to develop solutions to issues such as homelessness, poverty, and hunger.

Freedom from Fear

The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor -- anywhere in the world. -- FDR

This picture shows two children safely being tucked into bed by parents. The father holds a newspaper in his hand that reads "Bombings K...Horror Hit..."

Reading the father's expression, we can see his relief that his children would sleep safely that night and not be awakened and threatened by others. Rockwell reminds us all that others are not always so lucky.

Our Scout Programs instill in our Scouts an interest in others. If our Scouts see someone in their school lunchroom who is sitting alone, they are expected to invite that person to join them or sit down with them. If our Scouts witness someone being bullied, they are expected to stand up for that person and get help in the safest way. Our Scouts have an interest in the safety of others.

The speech ended with the following excerpt:

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called "new order" of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb. -- FDR

These words are from another era, but they are as relevant to us today as they were then. We instill in our Scouts an appreciation of the importance of responsibility for themselves and for the planet, to make this world a better place for everyone.