

Religious freedom

For a number of years now, I have been either an active participant or a spectator at the Annual 4th of July celebration at Ladd Stadium. It is certainly a credit to the City of Mobile and its citizenry to publicly proclaim and cherish our independence and freedom. One of the basic freedoms all Americans enjoy is the freedom of worship (and prayer) in keeping with his or her faith commitment. Each year, either through oversight or an inappropriate evangelistic zeal, a speaker and/or clergyman systematically excludes those many patriotic Americans whose religious beliefs are other than Christian by suggesting that all pray "in the name of Jesus". Prayer has been an important part of our life and we happen to profess Christianity and try to live out our faith day by day. However, both our faith and humanity suggest that we show respect for the beliefs and sensibilities of our friends and neighbors.

If it is deemed necessary to offer public prayer at a celebration such as this, it would behoove all of us to be aware of the religious plurality that exists in our free nation and therefore pray accordingly. As for us, it does not diminish our Christianity one bit when we join hands with our friends and neighbors and pray to the "one God and Father of us all".

PAUL J. FILBEN
MARY A. FILBEN
1537 Deerwood Dr. E.
Mobile