

Sunday, June 30, 2019.

Morning. Today's mass readings have to do with letting go of the past. Elisha asks permission to say goodbye to his past before he agrees to follow Elijah. The second reading wants us not to return to the yoke of slavery once we have experienced freedom in our Christ-life. In response to Jesus' offer to come follow him, a man asks to first say farewell to his past.

Afternoon. The people in today's readings are asked to make a radical shift in their lifestyle, which will involve letting go of their past way of life. Giving up little things is easy. They do not have a great hold on us. But giving up big things is painfully hard and very difficult and impossible if we continue to look back at them. Say goodbye to that past way of life. Clean break. No looking back.

Evening. That which we must give up – for our own good, for the good of someone we love, for the good of our human family as a whole – regardless of the specific reason – let us remember that there is or was a reason why it is or was so hard for us to give it up – namely because it had such a firm hold on us. No looking back. It is still too powerful. If we look back, that hold it has on us will be reinforced rather than broken.

Monday, July 1, 2019.

Morning. There will come a time in the life of each and everyone of us when we will be called to give up that thing, make a clean break from that which threatens to destroy our lives and the lives of those whom we love. It will require a hard, fast and painful action.

Afternoon. It is a high price, but it comes as a reward to those who persevere, as promised in yesterday's second reading: "Brothers and sisters, for freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters."

Evening. Unfortunately, we at times misconstrue what freedom really is. We falsely assume that it is the right and privilege to do whatever we want whenever we want, regardless of how much it may hurt us or others. Such a way of life results in, at best, some pretty nasty and bad habits and, at worse, we find ourselves caught in the grip of an addiction.

Tuesday, July 2, 2019.

Morning. Freedom is our power and control to say yes or no to any desire that comes our way. Freedom is the power to say "yes," to a moderate amount of alcohol or prescription medication, and "no" to an amount and frequency that would build an unhealthy dependency.

Afternoon. Freedom is the ability to control and direct our anger. Let us be reminded that all anger is not sinful. Jesus himself expressed righteous anger. We too, in imitation of him, can express righteous anger, but we need to maintain the freedom to have the control to not give into uncontrolled, violently abusive and destructive anger, especially when directed against those very people who are the nearest and dearest loved ones in our lives.

Evening. Freedom is the ability and control on the part of a person to live out his or her sexuality in a moral, safe and healthy manner. Freedom is the ability on our part to not break the 10th commandment, but rather to be free from covetousness and thank God for the favors that in his wisdom he has granted to our neighbors but withheld from us.

Wednesday, July 3, 2019.

Morning. The salvation journey of our entire human family, harkening all the way back to Adam and Eve, is one of God wanting his people to be happy. God offers humankind freedom. God rescues us when we lose our freedom and sink into slavery of one sort or another.

Afternoon. Adam and Eve had it all, except for the fruit of one tree. But they could not say no to that one tree. They just had to eat of it. They were slaves to their need to have more than that which God had generously given to them. This applies to our own lives. How miserable we can make ourselves when we focus on what we do not have. How happy we can make ourselves when we focus with gratitude on that which the Lord has given to us.

Evening. While Moses was on the Mountaintop for 40 days, receiving the very Holy Law and way of life that would make the people of Israel happy, these very people became bored. They wanted excitement. They wanted revelry. They wanted Saturday night at the frat house all week long. So they melted down their jewelry and made a golden calf and played wild music and drank and danced crazily and gave themselves to sexual excess.

Thursday, July 4, 2019.

Morning. Since the beginning of time, God has wanted humankind to be free. Two-thousand years ago, Jesus himself gave up his life to secure for us freedom from sin and death. Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, we secured freedom for ourselves as a nation. We celebrate this day: July 4.

Afternoon. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol of our freedom. Many of our ancestors were greeted by her as they made their way into New York harbor. At the base of the Statue of Liberty reads the words, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

Evening. Emma Lazarus wrote the words that appear at the base of the Statue of Liberty and based the words on Jesus' similar offer of 2,000 years ago. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light (Matthew)."

Friday, July 5, 2019.

Morning. Both the words of Emma Lazarus as well as the words from the Gospel of Matthew offer an invitation of welcome to those who are in need and in want.

Afternoon. Our pride and desire to impress others leads us to project an image of mighty strength. We may even come to believe and trust in our strength. During the day, I surround myself with those people who support the image I have formed of myself.

Evening. By night, I dream of my greatness, or if reality breaks through in a nightmare, I wake up in a cold sweat, soon to reassure myself that it was only a dream.

Saturday, July 6, 2019.

Morning. As much as we want to be strong and mighty, we need to remember that Jesus' invitation is to those who admit that at times our strength fails us and we tire.

Afternoon. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened." I would argue that just about everybody who walks this planet is labored and burdened in some way or other. The only difference is that some admit it. Others deny it, because it would be a sign of weakness.

Evening. Either (1) we stick to the image we have made about ourselves, denying our weaknesses and asserting our strengths, and thereby do not meet the requirements of Jesus' invitation. Or (2) we admit that we are to some extent labored and burdened and in need of rest and willing to accept a yoke, and thereby show that we do fit the criteria of Jesus' invitation.

Sunday, July 7, 2019.

Morning. Let us get down to the truth that yes at times we are labored and burdened. Life does weigh heavily on us from time to time. We are in need of rest both spiritually and figuratively.

Afternoon. Jesus offers us an invitation. Let us respond by admitting what he asks us to admit, not because we are whiners and complainers, but because he simply does not want to fight us.

Evening. Jesus is God. He could break through our defenses and our boasting of being strong and powerful. But he chooses to wait – he himself stated that he is "Meek and humble of heart." He will wait, and wait, and wait, until finally we come around and admit our need for his rest and his yoke. A yoke that is easy. A burden that is light. Rest.