

COLUMNISTS

Freedom is being yoked to Christ

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 11:25-30. (R1) Zechariah 9:9-10. (R2) Romans 8: 9, 11-13.

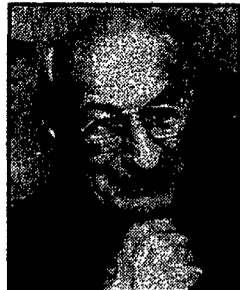
July Fourth is Independence Day. What does it mean to be free?

For some people it means avoiding all responsibility, eliminating all constraints, doing one's own thing without any regard to the effect on others or society at large. We label this Individual Absolutism: I alone matter, the public be damned; I can do what I want, and I will, no matter the consequences. This kind of thinking eliminates the common good. This "freedom" is absence of responsibility.

Deep in our hearts we know such freedom is a lie; it creates a hell. Just look about at our society today to see what freedom from responsibility has done: It has created moral bankruptcy and monumental misery.

True freedom has to be yoked to responsibility. In the Gospel, Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

A yoke is a wooden harness for two oxen or horses. It binds two animals together. The result is that they would share the load equally as they plowed the fields.



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

Jesus knew all about yokes. He had spent hours helping Joseph. He knew that a yoke had to fit animals perfectly, otherwise it would harm them. It could be neither too big nor too small.

True freedom for the believer is being yoked with Christ. When the going gets rough and tough, Jesus is there with us encouraging us, sharing the load, helping us to make it through. The problem gets impossible when we try to face it alone. But the yoke becomes easy and the burden light when we allow Jesus to pull along with us. A false freedom is when we try to handle our own problems without Christ; when we refuse to be yoked to him.

If we are not yoked to Christ, we become yoked to pleasure or money or success or power; in a word, to unhappiness. True freedom is delivery from sin.

In Sierra Leone, West Africa, villagers carry heavy loads on their heads. They learn how to do this as soon as they learn to walk. One lady used to deliver engine blocks from one repair shop to another. Four men would lift the engine block on to a tray that she carried on her head and off she would go across town carrying this enormous weight. One day when the lady came to her destination, she found no one there to assist her in taking off the load. She tried to do it herself, and, in so doing, she broke her neck and died.

The people of the villages and the city understood the importance and significance of helping each other with the heavy loads that they carry. There is a weight that we all carry sometimes that is so heavy we cannot move it ourselves. That weight and burden is sin.

The good news is that Jesus has given us somebody whose specialty is lifting this load. He is the priest in the confessional. Jesus gave him this power when he said, "Whose sins you shall forgive,

they are forgiven." How wonderful!

We Catholics are the only people on this planet earth who do not have to carry around the burden of guilt. Some people try to sweep guilt under the rug or deny it or blame parents for it. But they do not get rid of it. Only a good confession can rid us of the guilt of sin and make us really free.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming, N.Y.

Daily Readings

Monday, July 8

Hosea 2:16, 17-18, 21-22;

Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday, July 9

Hosea 8:4-7, 11-13; Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday, July 10

Hosea 10:1-3, 7-8, 12; Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday, July 11

Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9; Matthew 10:7-15

Friday, July 12

Hosea 14:2-10; Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday, July 13

Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 10:24-33

Sponsor a child

at a Catholic mission site

This is Conchita. She lives in Guatemala in a one-room house with a tin roof, a dirt floor and no electricity. Only four years old, she must help her mother carry water for cooking and bathing. She gets very tired but finds little comfort on her stiff wooden bed with a straw mattress. Because her father earns only \$25 per month as a day laborer, there is no money for playthings, and even basic necessities are a luxury to her family of six.



Through CFCA, you can sponsor a child with the amount you can afford. Ordinarily it takes \$20 a month to provide a child with the life-changing benefits of sponsorship. But if this is not possible for you, we invite you to do what you can.

CFCA works hand-in-hand with dedicated, trusted Catholic missionaries and lay leaders who know their communities and labor tirelessly to improve conditions for needy children and their families. Your sponsorship dollars help them do the work Jesus has called us to do.

When you become a sponsor you receive a photo of your child, their personal family history, a description of the country where your child lives, and the CFCA newsletter. Your new friend will write you - and you may write them as often as you like. But most of all, you have the satisfaction of helping a child in need.


Please don't miss this opportunity to make a difference.

Sponsor a child today!

But there is hope!

You can help one very poor child like Conchita through **Christian Foundation for Children and Aging** (CFCA), a Catholic sponsorship program assisting needy children at Catholic mission sites around the world.

You can help a poor child receive nourishing food, medical care, the chance to go to school and hope for a brighter future. **You can literally change a life!**



CFCA
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