Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 20, 2025

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Before highways can be constructed, work crews must clear the roadway. Sometimes trees have to be cut down, boulders have to be moved, and hills have to be leveled. Whatever interferes with the laying of the highway must go.

Jesus had something like that in mind. When he invited people to be his disciples, he expected them to remove from their lives whatever stood in the way following him. His enigmatic statement, "Let the dead bury their dead," did not mean that he opposed the burial of loved ones. In one sense his declaration means that those who reject him are like dead people since they have rejected the Lord of life, but it was also Jesus' way of saying that we must decide that nothing may be more important than loyalty to him.

The First Reading this weekend describes an episode from the Old Testament in which a man had to make a decision. Elijah's cloak was a symbol of his prophetic office. When he threw it over Elisha, he was inviting Elisha to succeed him as a prophet in Israel. Elisha seemed to hesitate for a moment. He thought of his parents. What should he do? His freedom allowed him to make his own decision. A strong resolution burned within his heart. He slaughtered his oxen and burned his plowing equipment. That meant that he gave up his means of livelihood. He then fed his people in farewell to them, and left to follow Elijah. We might say that he burned his bridges behind him.

Jesus invites us to do much the same, to follow him unreservedly. At baptism he placed a white garment over us. It was a symbol that we were a new people with a new life, a life of true freedom. Jesus wants all of us to be free of all obstacles to full discipleship, but freedom is a somewhat complex reality. We live in a free society, but these days we witness and must endure the abuse of freedom. Our society has canonized the phrase, ":Freedom of choice." It is used to justify choosing abortion over the right to life. In fact, a former U.S. Senator declared in his dogmatic manner that "Freedom of choice is the most fundamental of human rights." He was wrong -dead wrong. His ideas of freedom is not what Jesus intends for us.

The kind of freedom Jesus give us is for the sake of love. Jesus does not force us to become his disciples to be devoted to him, to love him above everyone and everything. He grants us freedom to choose because love which is forced is not love at all.

In our Eucharistic acclamation we acknowledge that Jesus paid a great price for our freedom: "Lord, by your cross and resurrection, you have set us free." Jesus freed us from sin so that of our own free will we may love him unreservedly.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**July 22**	**11:00AM**
Vilma & Tony† (Anniversary)		
Wed.	**July 23**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Thur.	**July 24**	**11:00AM**
Jennifer Manlutac		Ed & Mae
Fri.	**July 25**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Sat.	**July 26**	**4:30PM**
David Ponti †		Franca
Sun.	**July 27**	**9:00AM**
Jorge, Tomas, Jose & Manuel †		Family
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of our Parish		

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