



My Dear Parishioners,

Praised be Jesus Christ! Each year as the 4th of July approaches, I commend to my friends, my favorite book on American Liberty. Eric Metaxas 2016 best-seller: IF YOU CAN KEEP IT. It's my favorite because this small book has a simple premise: Namely, Liberty works so long as you can keep it. And to keep liberty is to seek/want virtue. Apart from a desire to seek virtue, liberty always fails. This is both a great paradox and important teaching: That Liberty is not license; it's the freedom to pursue the good. It is a great gift and a sacred trust, entrusted to each of us. It's a gift that can be lost...even in our pursuit of "good" things. Welcome to our fallen world...enraged, angry and bound up by so many things.

Last week, in this column I wrote about strength and gentleness, living a different way. On Sunday, Pope Francis in his Sunday Angelus spoke directly about anger and the "tremendous interior strength" it takes to resist it. In the aftermath of the Roe-vs-Wade decision, I found his words worth sharing. It's a short but worthwhile read. Enjoy this 4th of July and be sure of my gratitude and prayers.

Peace, Fr. Rogers

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he *made a resolute decision* to set his face to go to Jerusalem" (cf. Lk 9:51). Thus he begins his "great journey" toward the Holy City which required a special decision because it was his last one. The disciples, filled with enthusiasm because they were still too worldly, dream that the Master is going to meet with triumph. Instead, Jesus knows that rejection and death await him in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 9:22, 43b-45); he knows he will have to suffer a great deal. This is what demands a *resolute decision*. And so, Jesus goes forward taking decisive steps toward Jerusalem. This is the same decision we must take if we want to be disciples of Jesus. What does this decision consist of? For we must be serious disciples of Jesus, truly decisively, not "rosewater Christians" as an old woman I knew used to say. No, no, no! Decisive Christians. And the episode the Evangelist Luke narrates right after this helps us understand.

They set out on their journey. A village of Samaritans, having learned that Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem – which was the city of their adversaries – does not welcome him. Outraged, the apostles James and John suggest to Jesus that he should punish those people by raining fire from heaven down on them. Not only does Jesus not accept this proposal, he also rebukes the two brothers. They want to involve Jesus in their desire for revenge and he will have none of it (cf. vv. 52-55). The "fire" that Jesus came to bring on the earth is something else (cf. Lk 12:49). It is the merciful Love of the Father. And it takes patience, constancy, and a penitential spirit to make this fire grow.

James and John, instead, allow themselves to be overcome by anger. This happens to us too when, even when we are doing something good, perhaps even with sacrifice, we find a closed door instead of being welcomed. So we get angry. We even try to involve God himself, threatening heavenly punishments. Jesus, instead, takes another route, not the path of anger, but that of a resolute decision to go forward far from translating into harshness, implies calm, patience, longsuffering, not slackening the least bit in doing good. This way of being does not connote weakness, no, but, on the contrary, a tremendous interior strength. It is easy, it is instinctive, to allow ourselves to be overcome by anger when faced with opposition. What is difficult, instead, is to master oneself, doing as Jesus did who, as the Gospel says, "went on to another village" (v. 56). This means that when we meet with opposition, we must turn toward doing good elsewhere, without recrimination. This way, Jesus helps us to be people who are serene, who are happy with the good accomplished, and who do not seek human approval.

Now, we can ask ourselves: what point are we at? What point are we at? In the face of opposition, misunderstanding, do we turn to the Lord? Do we ask him for his steadfastness in doing good? Or do we rather seek confirmation through applause, ending up being bitter and resentful when we do not hear it? Many times, consciously or unconsciously, we seek applause, approval from others, and we do things for applause. No, that does not work. We must do good out of service, not seeking applause. Sometimes we think that our fervour is due to a sense of justice for a good cause. But in reality, most of the time it is nothing other than pride, united with weakness, sensitivity, and impatience. So, let us ask Jesus for the strength of being like him, of following him resolutely down the path of service, not to be vindictive, not to be intolerant when difficulties present themselves, when we spend ourselves in doing good and others do not understand this, or even when they disqualify us. No, silence and go ahead.

May the Virgin Mary help us make the resolute decision Jesus did to remain in love to the end.