

Dear St. Columbkille Family,

I have always been fascinated by the history of Israel and how much we can learn from it. First, I would like to recall the time of the Hebrew's liberation from Egypt.

God outlines for Moses in the process of liberation from Egypt. To be "delivered" may refer to a personal process of dealing with internalized oppression. Here we see the importance of not only removing oneself from the physical situation of oppression, but of removing the internal obstacles to liberation that keep us enslaved.

But liberation cannot remain on the level of the individual. Even if I am successful in achieving some measure of freedom for myself, whether physically and/or psychically, the oppressive situation remains. "Redemption" then refers to a larger process of working with others to address the cause of oppression, to begin to root out those factors that contribute to any type of enslavement or degradation.

But still, it does not end there—for the Israelites were not only freed from slavery, they were freed for the holy work of serving the Ultimate. "And I will take you to be My people" points towards the ultimate goal of our personal and communal freedom.

To be "taken to" God's service is to embrace the possibility of becoming, to be able to see beyond the constraints of this historical moment, with all of its violence and ongoing oppressions, towards a place of liberation. To know God is to experience the reality of moving from a state of slavery to one of freedom. And this is a communal endeavor: it is not enough to just free myself.

This piece of God's message ends with the words: "And you shall know that I am YHVH your God, who took you out from under the bondage of Egyptians." Through the unfolding experience of liberation, the Israelites will come to truly know God, will have a new awareness of and connection to the source of life. God becomes known in that place where all of us can be free.

Secondly, I wish to include the liberation of Israel from Babylon. Nearly two years have passed since Babylon was captured by the Medes and the Persians and the Israelites are leaving Babylon. How did they get free? Who let them go?

Cyrus, the king of Persia, did. The prophet Isaiah said that Cyrus would give the command for Jerusalem and its temple to be built again. This is what Cyrus tells the Israelites: 'Go, now, to Jerusalem and build the temple of Yahweh, your God.' And this is just what these Israelites are on their way to do.

But not all the Israelites in Babylon can make the long trip back to Jerusalem. It is a long, long trip of about 500 miles and many are too old or too sick to travel so far. And there are other reasons why some people don't go. But Cyrus tells those that don't go:

'Give silver and gold and other gifts to the people who are going back to build Jerusalem and its temple.

So, many gifts are given to these Israelites who are on their way to Jerusalem. Also, Cyrus gives them the bowls and the cups that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Yahweh's temple when he destroyed Jerusalem. The people have a lot of things to carry back with them.

After about four months of traveling, the Israelites get back to Jerusalem right on time. It is just 70 years since the city was destroyed, and the land was left completely empty of people.

Independence Day commemorates the Declaration of Independence of the United States. On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress declared that the 13 American colonies were no longer subject to the monarch of Britain, King George III, and were now united, free, and independent states. Independence Day is the national day of the United States.

As we celebrate the 244th anniversary of our nation's independence, let us take a moment to reflect on the freedoms that we enjoy and give thanks to God for the gifts He has given us and our country.

On Sunday, October 8, 1995, Pope Saint John Paul II concluded a five-day American tour with a mass in Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Baltimore. In his homily, he said:

One hundred thirty years ago, President Abraham Lincoln asked whether a nation 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal' could long endure. President Lincoln's question is no less a question for the present generation of Americans. Democracy cannot be sustained without *a shared commitment to certain moral truths about the human person and human community*. The basic question before a democratic society is: 'how ought we to live together?' In seeking an answer to this question, can society exclude moral truth and moral reasoning? Can the Biblical wisdom which played such a formative part in the very founding of your country be excluded from that debate?

Would not doing so mean that America's founding documents no longer have any defining content, but are only the formal dressing of changing opinion? Would not doing so mean that tens of millions of Americans could no longer offer the contribution of their deepest convictions to the formation of public policy? Surely it is important for America that the moral truths which make freedom possible should be passed on to each new generation.

Every generation of Americans needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought, and this is valid to all American citizens, born and nationalized. As we have learned from Israel's history, it is very easy to lose liberty and freedom, let us be responsible and not forget it.

St. Columbkille updates:

Our Church capacity is 1,200 seats. Since we re-opened for weekend, we have no more than 500 in total for 6 masses. The most crowded masses are Saturday 3pm and Sunday 9am with no more than 120 participants, that means 10% of our capacity. The attendance at other masses are around 6% and 8 % of our capacity. If you attend Saturday 5pm, Sunday 11am or 5:30pm there are many open areas in church.

We will continue giving **Communion under the Portico on Sunday from 12noon to 12:30pm** for those who watch the mass on TV (Our diocesan Mass is on Sunday 10:30am on local Fox 4) There is no need to exit your car in the driveway of the Church. **Dispensation from obligation to attend Sunday Mass until September 1st, 2020.**

On Saturdays, we offer a **Communal Rosary and Mariam Novena** beginning at 8:00am and the **Sacrament of Reconciliation under the Portico** (Driveway without exit your car) from 8:30am to 9:30am.

When you come to church you must remember to bring your face mask and keep it out of respect to others; practice the social distancing when you find a seat and at the moment to receive Holy Communion; use hand sanitizer near to the door once you enter the church and when you leave. Families may stay together and if someone feels sick should stay home. Your donations and offertory envelopes can be dropped off before or after mass in one of the two baskets located in front of the altar.

We are working to provide an online Faith Formation this coming fall for Children and Adults, as well as with the youth group and Bible Study. More information will be provided soon.

May the Lord be by your side as we persevere believing on Him.

Fr. Lorenzo