

A Partnership with Christ  
Fourteenth Sunday of OT  
July 6, 2014  
Matthew 11:25-30

Two years ago, Senator Mark Kirk of Illinois suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed on his right side.

A month after the stroke, all the senator could do was lie in bed - he couldn't swallow, he couldn't sit up, he couldn't move. The senator was devastated, depressed and wanted to give-up.

Among the many get-well cards and letters Senator Kirk received was this:

*Dear Senator Kirk,*

*My name is Jackson Cunningham. I live in Oakwood, Illinois, and I am nine years old. Last year on February 19, 2011, I had a stroke. I was a healthy kid. [Then] I couldn't move a muscle on my left side. After a month in the hospital, I went to Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. After the first two days they took away my crutches and I have been walking since then. A lot of therapy helped . . . This past fall, I started school again. I go for half a day. I am still doing therapy on my left side. I can talk fine . . .*

*I wanted to wish you good luck. Here's some advice: Do not give up on yourself. All the hard work is worth it. They*

*make you work hard [in rehab] and you get lots of things back fast.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jackson Cunningham*

Jackson's letter was the beginning of a fast friendship that continues to this day. They regularly exchange letters, sharing their passions for Legos, baseball and video games, as well as keeping each other updated on their individual progress and cheering each other on.

So often like the Senator who suffered a stroke we become discouraged as we experience the daily pains and discomforts we suffer in their attempt to be faithful to Christ's teachings.

"We have this problem," we pray about it constantly and I make all the effort we can, yet we keep falling into the same temptation over and over again."

Maybe we have an addiction or demon we are constantly fighting, like anger, impatience, judging another, gambling, drinking and the list goes on and on.

We have prayed about it. we have sought help. And we really try.

Yet after a few days of apparent success, we find ourself falling right back to where we started.

In today's gospel Jesus offers us a way out: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The rest he promises is a release from the experience of serving God as a fatigue and a burden.

The promise means that serving God could be transformed into a sweet experience of rest.

Jesus then goes on to show how: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (verse 29).

Jesus is inviting us to cast away our burdens and take on his yoke. This is because, unlike the burdens we bear, his yoke is easy and his burden light.

So then, what is this yoke of Christ?

The yoke of Christ can be seen as the sum of our Christian responsibilities and duties.

Servants were said to be under the yoke of their masters (1 Timothy 6:1) and subjects under the yoke of their rulers (1 Kings 12:10).

To take the yoke of Christ, therefore, is to put ourselves in a relationship or a partnership with Christ as his servants and subjects, and to conduct ourselves accordingly.

There is, however, a better way of understanding the yoke of Christ.

Among the Jews the yoke was put on the necks of two cattle so that together they could pull the plough as one.

It always takes a pair to work a yoke.

When Jesus asks you to take the yoke, you might as well ask who is your yoke-mate.

Your yoke-mate is none other than Jesus himself.

The yoke, in fact, belongs to him and he only invites you to team up with him.

The yoke of Christ is not just a yoke *from* Christ but also a yoke *with* him.

It is a partnership that lasts a life-time,

To take the yoke of Christ is to associate and identify ourselves with him: our destiny with his destiny, our vision with his vision and our mission with his mission.

It is to know that we are not pulling the yoke alone and by our power but together with Christ and by the strength that comes from him.

It is to know that Jesus is not just a teacher who gives you homework but also a friend who helps you do it.

It is to know that Jesus is the one who pulls out of the hole of life that so often we dig ourselves into each day.

This weekend as we continue of Celebration of Independence Day, we are thankful each day for the freedoms we have as a people and a nation.

Also we are reminded that true inner freedom can only be achieved when we partner ourselves with Christ for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.