

**Column070719**  
**Companions on the Journey**

July 7, 2019

Dear Friends.

It is summertime, the lazy, hazy days of summer. I am sure that I will never again experience in my life the kind of freedom and the seemingly unlimited amount of unfettered time that I experienced when I was a lad. Summertime offered opportunities to play, to explore, to spend time with, and to enjoy. It is not that we do not have moments when we experience any of the items on that list. It is that whenever we do it is rather fleeting while when we were younger there seemed this endless horizon of available free time.

Spending time with some of my great nieces and nephews over the Fourth of July, I was reminded how early little ones come to understand the word, "No!" How do I know they understand the word, "No?" They use it themselves back to the adults who taught it to them and they use it perfectly to convey their own opposition or displeasure. The adult "No!" to the child is often loud and firm. The child's "No!" back to the adult is tossed off with an adamant tone brooking no opposition. Even at 18 months they know about one-up-manship. Their "No!" overrides our directive.

"I don't want to." "I don't feel like it." These are variations of the "No!" but with a tad more elaboration. We say them when we are young; we don't say them as much when we get older. When we get older we find other more sophisticated ways to convey our reluctance or our displeasure. We know we have to come up with reasons for our not wanting to do something. And the reason has to at least sound plausible even though at times it isn't because of the particular reason but simply because we "don't want to" or "don't feel like it." Sometimes as adults we get a little out of touch and we don't even realize when we say "No!" or to whom.

If I ask a hundred people if they would willfully say "No!" to God (who has created them, given them life, blessed them with abilities and talents, surrounded them with good people to love and be loved by, granted them ample amounts of time, graced them with a lifetime of opportunities of grace), every one of them would reply that they would not say "No!" to God. But then there are ways and ways to say "No!"

When the Lord extends an invitation to dine with him, to take a seat at his table, to listen to his story of love and to feed us with his own love on a regular basis, then we must recognize how serious He is, how much He wants us to be with Him. When the Lord dresses his table and becomes the very food that will sustain us then we have to grow to understand that we need what He is giving and offering. Yes, of course, we are free to do what we will. Yes, we can go without that encounter for a time. I am not talking so much about those things. I am speaking of the attitude that slowly seeps into us that says "I'm a good person. I'll get there when I can. It's all okay. God still loves me anyway."

Yes, God still loves us but like any relationship of love if it is fed by only one side of the relationship it begins to wither and die from the other side. Would it not be a tragic, tragic thing for us to lose this intimate relationship with the very God of love simply because we were lazy? Because we didn't "feel like" spending time with the Lord and Master of all that is? Who will dare speak such a word of challenge to us?

Summertime does allow some additional time to think about things. Think about that and choose to be the person the Lord invites you to be and have the relationship with Him that will make you the person that only you can be.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry