

**Thirteenth Sunday of Year C**  
**Adam DeLeon**

**Lectionary 166:**

1 Kgs 19:16b, 19-21  
Ps 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11  
Gal 5:1, 13-18  
Luke 9:51-62

**Possible preaching paths:**

- **Yoke on oxen from first and second reading:** Yokes are used by farmers to harness the energy of livestock. While yokes can harm, they can also guide. We are called to be free, not live by the yoke.
- **Desires of the flesh from the second reading:** Addictions can control us and harm us. By looking at addictive behavior, we can learn the ways God works to bring us freedom
- **Creating a safe space (birds and nests) from the Gospel:** Birds create a safe space through nesting, a trait they learn from other birds, like we learn from the Church community and Christ.

**Possible scientific resources:**

- **On yoke and oxen**
  - On Yokes: Culture, Comfort, and animal Welfare: explores the different types of yokes for oxen, addressing how to improve animal comfort, performance and welfare  
[https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2397&context=faculty\\_pubs](https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2397&context=faculty_pubs)
    - Developing Suitable Yokes for Draft Oxen in Sub-Saharan Africa: discusses the difference between yokes and collars on animals
  - <http://www.animaltraction.net/challenges/challenges-thiec-yokes.pdf>
  - Video on how to yoke oxen  
<https://www.nytimes.com/video/dining/100000000802394/how-to-yoke-oxen.html>
- **What addictions do to the brain**

- What does addiction do to the brain?  
<https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/addiction-brain/>
- Addiction and It's Brain Science: Discusses how science identifies how addiction affects behavior and the brain  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2005.01260.x>
- Addiction as a Brain Disease Revised: Why It Still Matters, and the Need for Consilience: Argues that the brain is the place where both addiction and the capacity for behavior change arise  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41386-020-00950-y>
- **The ingenuity of bird nests, and what nest-building birds can teach us**
  - A short video explain various types of nests  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8HaGHMHHys>
    - Nest Building by Birds: describes: Nest Building by Birds: describes what bird nests are like, used for, and how birds learn to build nests  
[https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdf/S0960-9822\(08\)00066-3.pdf](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/pdf/S0960-9822(08)00066-3.pdf)
  - What can nest building birds teach us? Research reveals that instinct alone is not how birds nest, but the learn from others  
[https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/9017/CCBR\\_05\\_Breen\\_v11\\_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/9017/CCBR_05_Breen_v11_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

### Homily outline:

- **Oxen yokes: what they are and how they work**
  - A yoke is a device used to link draft animals, such as an ox, so that their combined energy can be used to carry out specific operations; they have been in existence for over 3000 years
  - A yoke is referenced over 90 times in the Bible
  - Yokes can be employed for farming, e.g., plowing. The book of Kings references a yoke of oxen being used for such a thing (1 Kings 19:19 14:14)
  - Yokes can also be employed for transportation of people or goods, a purpose also noted in the bible (Num 7:3)
    - <http://www.animaltraction.net/challenges/challenges-thiec-yokes.pdf>
- **Reinventing the yoke**
  - There are multiple designs for yokes that have evolved over the centuries  
<https://homesteadontherange.com/2017/01/24/ox-yokes-and-collars-neck-yokes-and-head-yokes/>
  - Poorly designed yokes can hurt the animal; this is especially true of neck yokes that can cause pain, allow sores to develop and even contribute to broken bones

- Animals in a poorly design yoke are reluctant to work and impeded production
- Some yoke designs also restrict the movement of the animals, also reducing their productivity
- Over time, yokes have been adapted and carved to better fit the animal in order to maximize comfort and the animal’s willingness to work
- Better engineering has helped the yoking process be effective and productive, important for many places in the world that still employ yokes for farming and transportation
  - [https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2397&context=faculty\\_pubs](https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2397&context=faculty_pubs)
  
- **Yoke as a symbolism of oppression**
  - The majority of references to yoke in the bible employ it as a metaphor
    - Either for oppression (e.g., 1 Kings 12:11)
    - Or the breaking of the yoke as a symbol of freedom (e.g., Jer 28:2)
  - Often it is God who speaks in reference to yokes, both as punishment and as liberation
  - In ancient Italy, defeated enemies were required to walk under a yoke of constructed spears as a form of humiliation
    - The Latin was *sub iugum* from which the modern English word “subjugate” is derived
  - Paul’s reference to the “yoke of slavery” in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading references this tradition
  
- **Following Jesus**
  - We are called to follow Jesus Christ in freedom, not by the yoke if slavery
  - In the New Testament the yoke is often linked to Jewish law (e.g., Acts 15:10), especially a narrow interpretation of that law
    - In which rules and guidelines are given priority over people
    - Much like the productivity of farming or transportation is given priority in using a yoke than the treatment of the ox
  - Jesus Christ has set us free from such a restrictive approach
    - We are not animals that are forced into relationship with God, our Master, but rather Jesus calls us friends (John 15:15)
    - We are set free from the slavery of sin by Jesus Christ, including the slavery to be good only to those who are similar to us or return good to us (Luke 6:33)
  - We have been freed by Christ from the yoke of sin, but this freedom does not give us free reign to do whatever we wish (Paul makes that clear in the second reading)

- Our new yoke is Christ's own, in his gentleness and humility (Matt 11:29-30)
- Our new yoke is the new commandment to love God and our neighbor as ourselves
- We are called in freedom to enact Christ's mission of serving others, even our enemies
- God's own spirit is our new guide
  - Leading us to seek out and alleviate the needs of others
  - Not because of a rule or some oppressive requirement
  - But because we are companioned by Christ, embraced by his life-giving friendship, and emboldened to love freely

**Tags:** agricultural science, cooperation, engineering, freedom, yokes

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### **About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative**

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.