

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.”

July 5, 2020

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

Zech 9:9-10; Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14; Rom. 8:9, 11-13; Matt 11:25-30

Today’s readings are an invitation to humility and meekness. I think my immediate response might be, “Humility? Thanks, but I’ll pass on it.” By this I mean that, in our present day, our world doesn’t seem to value humility but instead prizes fame, power and a certain swagger. Yet St. Ignatius always tells us that greater intimacy with Jesus comes through humility and humiliation.

In the first reading, the beleaguered Israelites, who were always awaiting a strong political king to save them, are told to expect a different kind of savior. Yes, He comes in total simplicity, riding not the powerful chariot or a warrior’s horse, but the humble, plodding transportation of the poor: a young donkey. And this Savior promises to banish the weapons and instruments of war “and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.” Admittedly, both the people of Israel, and we today, long for peace. We can hear this promise in our hearts.

The message is reinforced by the psalm, as we are invited into a relationship with a “God who is gracious, merciful, slow to anger and kind”. Our loving God promises to “lift up all who are falling and raise up all who are burdened in life”. Are there any of us who don’t need, and long for, that kind of support from God who has an endless supply of love? Hence, Yahweh assures us in Jeremiah 29:11 : “For I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future”. And today in the Gospel, He assures us through Jesus his son: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.”

Furthermore, Jesus graciously invites us: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.” The audience for this message from Jesus is the people who follow him each day. But of course, in the Christian life, we are not unaware that, “relief and rest” are not the end of the invitation. We are also called by Jesus to take up his yoke on our shoulders, and continue the work of caring for those around us, offering support to so many weary people, worn out under the unbearable weight of neglect and indifference, especially in this “New Normal Time”.

So how are we supposed to do that when we may not feel all that strong ourselves? It helps to picture a yoke/harness shared by two oxen which allows them to work together as a team. In

the same vein, Jesus is not handing over a burden to us but is asking us to join him in his work, to share the yoke because he is a dependable God!

This weekend, we celebrate our Independence as a nation. We treasure our Freedom in this Country, but if we think "Freedom" is permissiveness, i.e., doing anything we want, we won't have any freedom at all. Accordingly, in our own lives, we need to follow God's Laws in order to keep going in the right direction to find peace and happiness. In other words, God's way isn't to limit our freedom, as sometimes some people think, but to guide us to peace and happiness.

Our world, and our lives, seem so heavy and heart-wrenching right now. Yet we are called to a meekness that allows us to ask our loving God for help; to learn from Jesus how to make our way through it in small and humble service to others. Remember that today will never come again. And tomorrow is not promised. So appreciate who and what you have in your life. Be a blessing. Encourage someone. Take time to care and love with all your heart. And never take anyone for granted. Enjoy life, but in moderation! That is where we will finally find peace. Happy Independence Day!!!