

Scripture Study

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Zechariah 9:9-10

(Ps 145:1-2,8-11,13-14)

Romans 8:9,11-13

Matthew 11:25-30

Overview of the Gospel:

- Right before this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus has just spoken about the imprisoned John the Baptist (11:1-19), and condemned the unrepentant towns that would not heed his message (11:20-24). This in spite of the many miracles he had performed there.
- Now Jesus prays to God, his Father, in praise and thanksgiving that, even though the Gospel is rejected by those who are considered the mighty and educated in the world, it's message is embraced by the childlike (literally, "infants") who are open to it. This is due entirely to the generous initiative of the Father (verse 26).
- In language reminiscent of St. John's Gospel (John 3:35; 10:14-15; 17:25), Jesus describes the unique intimacy that he has with his Father. We catch glimpses here of that great mystery that is the Holy Trinity (verse 27).
- Finally, Jesus invites his listeners who are weighed down by the impossible demands of the Jewish law with its heavy prescriptions (Matthew 23:4; Acts 15:10) to take upon them *his* yoke, which they will find light, and under which they will find rest. The yoke of Jesus is one of love and obedience, under which we also will find our heavenly rest (Jeremiah 6:16; Hebrews 4:1-11).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading in which the prophet announces the coming of the Messiah, what were the characteristics of the Messiah to be? How might that contrast with the image some might have of a solely conquering-type Messiah?
- In the 2nd Reading, what does it mean to live in "the flesh"? In "the Spirit"? What should mark the life of one who is living in the Spirit?
- Why is the gospel hidden from the "wise and the learned"? Who truly knows God?
- What does Jesus mean by taking up his "yoke"? By the "rest" he promises those who do?
- How are you like the "wise and learned"? Like the "childlike"? Which should you be?
- What is the difference between the yoke Jesus' listeners are suffering under and the yoke he offers? Between your yoke and his?
- Is Jesus' yoke resting lightly on you or are you struggling to get out from under it?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2603, 544, 2785, 151, 459

Closing prayer

Every Christian should make Christ present among men. He ought to act in such a way that those who know Him sense 'the aroma of Christ' (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:15). Men should be able to recognize the Master in His disciples. --St Josemaria Escriva

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Scripture: *Matthew 11:25-30*

Meditation: Do you want to know the mind and heart of God? Jesus thanks the Father in heaven for revealing to his disciples the wisdom and knowledge of God. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about God and about ourselves? First, it tells us that God is both Father and Lord of earth as well as heaven. He is both Creator and Author of all that he has made, the first origin of everything and transcendent authority, and at the same time, goodness and loving care for all his children. All fatherhood and motherhood is derived from him (Ephesians 3:14-15). Jesus' prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God. What makes us ignorant and blind to the things of God? Certainly intellectual pride, coldness of heart, and stubbornness of will shut out God and his kingdom. Pride is the root of all vice and the strongest influence propelling us to sin. It first vanquishes the heart, making it cold and indifferent towards God. It also closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom for our lives. What is pride? It is the inordinate love of oneself at the expense of others and the exaggerated estimation of one's own learning and importance.

Jesus contrasts intellectual pride with child-like simplicity and humility. The simple of heart are like "babes" in the sense that they see purely without pretense and acknowledge their dependence and trust in the one who is greater, wiser, and more trustworthy. They seek one thing – the *summum bonum* or "greatest good" who is God himself. Simplicity of heart is wedded with humility, the queen of virtues, because humility inclines the heart towards grace and truth. Just as pride is the root of every sin and evil, so humility is the only soil in which the grace of God can take root. It alone takes the right attitude before God



and allows him as God to do all. *God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6). Only the humble in heart can receive true wisdom and understanding of God and his ways. Do you submit to God's word with simple trust and humility?

Jesus makes a claim which no one would have dared to make: He is the perfect revelation of God. One of the greatest truths of the Christian faith is that we can know the living God. Our knowledge of God is not simply limited to knowing something about God, but we can know God personally. The essence of Christianity, and what makes it distinct from Judaism and other religions, is the knowledge of God as our *Father*. Jesus makes it possible for each of us to personally know God as our Father. To see Jesus is to see what God is like. In Jesus we see the perfect love of God – a God who cares intensely and who yearns over men and women, loving them to the point of laying down his life for them upon the Cross. Jesus is the revelation of God – a God who loves us completely, unconditionally, and perfectly. Jesus also promises that God the Father will hear our prayers when we pray in his name. That is why Jesus taught his followers to pray with confidence, *Our Father who art in heaven ..give us this day our daily bread.* Do you pray to your Father

in heaven with joy and confidence in his love and care for you?

What does the yoke of Jesus refer to in the gospel? The Jews used the image of a yoke to express submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says his yoke is "easy". The Greek word for "easy" can also mean "well-fitting". Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen well. We are commanded to put on the "sweet yoke of Jesus" and to live the "heavenly way of life and happiness". Jesus also says his "burden is light". No burden is too heavy when it's given in love and carried in love. Jesus offers us a new kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. In his kingdom sins are not only forgiven but removed, and eternal life is poured out for all its citizens. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. The yoke of Christ's kingdom, his kingly rule and way of life, liberates us from the burden of guilt and from the oppression of sin and hurtful desires. Only Jesus can lift the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us. Jesus used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can exchange the burden of sin and despair for a burden of glory and yoke of freedom from sin. The yoke which Jesus invites us to embrace is his way of grace and freedom from the power of sin. Do you trust in God's love and submit to his will and plan for your life?

"Lord Jesus, give me the child-like simplicity and purity of faith to gaze upon your face with joy and confidence in your all-merciful love. Remove every doubt, fear, and proud thought which would hinder me from receiving your word with trust and humble submission."

