

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

9th July 2023 - 14th Sunday in OT

Readings (Year A): 1st: Zechariah 9:9-10. 2nd: Romans 8:9,11-13. **Gospel:** Matthew 11:25-30.

There are times, often many times, when many, if not all of us feel overburdened in our daily life. There can be so many demands, so much to do, and it is just since the pandemic that the whole world, one way or another seems to be in a great ferment. So much change in life as we knew it, where do we go for respite. The answer comes clearly in our gospel.

Jesus speaks to us clearly about his deep desire both to draw us to himself and to give us his rest. He goes on to speak rather more enigmatically about shouldering his yoke and learning from him.

Jesus we know expresses himself with unique tenderness, a sign of God's presence and goodness. He calls to follow him people who are burdened by a difficult life: He calls to follow him people who have many needs, and promises that in him they will find rest and relief.

Among those who are weary of life the Gospel also often includes the poor and the little ones. The invitation is extended in the imperative form: "**Come** to me", "**take** my yoke" and "**learn** from me".

The Lord does not reserve this phrase for certain friends of his: no, he addresses it to "**all**" those who are weary and overwhelmed by life. He knows that many things weary the heart: disappointments and wounds of the past, burdens to carry and wrongs to bear in the present, and the uncertainties, changes and worries about the future.

In the face of all this Jesus' first word is an invitation, a call to move and respond: **come**.

The mistake when things go wrong, is to stay where we are, lying there. It seems obvious, but how difficult it is to respond and open ourselves. In the dark times it feels natural to keep to ourselves, to ruminate over how unfair life is, over how ungrateful others are, how mean the world is, and so on. We all know it.

But in this way, locked up inside ourselves, we see everything as grim. Then we can wallow in it which then overcomes us. Jesus says **Come**.

The way out is in connecting, in extending a hand and lifting our gaze to those who truly love us. In fact it is not enough to come out of ourselves: it is important to know where to go. Jesus indicates where to go "**Come to me**." then "**Take my yoke**."

At first sight it may seem strange that Jesus, seeing us overburdened invites us to shoulder his yoke. But a yoke is not itself a burden, it is a piece of equipment – a double collar – by which two beasts of burden were linked together. Being linked physically together meant that neither beast carried a burden on their own. Through sharing the same burden they experience relief and rest.

Jesus shares our burdens. Not to magically resolve problems, but to strengthen us amid our problems. Jesus does not lift the burdens from our life, but the anguish from our heart; Jesus does not take away our cross but carries it with us. With him every burden becomes light, because he is the comfort we seek.

The heart of the Incarnation, God's mercy to us, is the reality that Jesus has come to join himself to us and to share our burdens with himself, be it the burden of our sin and guilt, or the weight of our responsibilities which he makes light by empowering us with his strength and spirit.

Daily, weekly he calls to us those same words:

Come to me: learn from me: take and eat. The Mass: Himself