

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – A

[Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 145; Romans 8:9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30.]

Sometimes the simplest truths are the deepest truths. The trouble is, because they are so simple, so basic, we don't spend much time thinking about them. They're just there.

We have one of those truths in today's passage from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus says: *"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."*

Let's pause a moment to take that in. We all experience moments of struggle in our lives, times of difficulty, days when we walk with uncertainty or turmoil; times when we feel as if we are at battle.

Many of these "battles" are fights within against sin or the results of sin. We deal with our anger; we battle laziness, sexual temptations, greed, arrogance, pride, and selfishness, the need to control situations or people. And we are left burdened.

Jesus invites us to rest in Him, to let go of the burdens, however we may name them for ourselves, and instead come to him in our weariness. As Jesus spoke to the people of his time he was most likely referring to the burdens placed on them by the restrictions of the Old Testament Law. We do not have that particular burden but we do have to contend with struggle in our lives just the same.

We grow weary because of other's unjust assumptions or presumptions about us, perhaps unfair criticism burdens us, or having to watch as a loved one suffers in illness. Sometimes the burden is there in life because of struggles, misunderstandings or the breakup of a close relationship. Some know the experience of being dealt a raw deal by an employer, the burden of unemployment and the fear that creates.

What parent hasn't suffered the anguish of worry for their child at sometime or another? The single parent, especially, can feel the burden of raising his or her family all alone and struggles with the constant demand on their time, alone. We experience the weariness that comes from watching one we love fight chemical dependency or we know the pain of a loved one's death. There is in human life brokenness, hurt and burden.

The promise of today's Gospel is that we do not have to walk with this reality alone because Jesus assures us that it is his desire to "refresh us." He tells us that we can lay our burdens on him. He who experienced the ultimate result of sin, crucifixion at the hands of others, is willing to take our burden onto himself. Jesus knows the reality of human suffering because he walked the same path before us but without sin. He eases our burdens by the grace that flows from his death and resurrection. Jesus never promised to take all pain or sorrow away, for we are redeemed "*not apart from the human condition, but rather in and through the human condition*" (Paula Ripple-Comin) but Jesus has promised to ease the burden of our pain and sorrow by his love.

Jesus died out of love for us but also out of a deep love for His Father. That is the meaning of the words we also hear in this Gospel: "*No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father, but the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him.*" This is another simple but profound truth. Jesus came down from heaven so that we could know God the Father and to join us to himself. Jesus became one of us so that he could bring us into the same loving relationship he has with his Father. There is an old saying in tradition: "The divine became human, so that humans could become divine." This is the truth of Jesus revealing God the Father to us as well as revealing to us the power of love that exists between Himself and God the Father. It is our participation in this relationship that is the source of our strength despite whatever might try to zap that strength at times.

Today and everyday then let us come to Jesus. Let us open our hearts to him in prayer trusting in the profound but simple truth that he has “come to give us life and to give us life to the full.” In our celebration of the Eucharist let us allow Jesus, who was broken for our sake on the cross but raised up again to new life in triumph, continue to ease the burdens we experience and heal the brokenness we may know in our hearts. *“Jesus longs to offer us the full gentleness, the complete tenderness of his love for us even as he longs for our tender, gentle love in return.”* (Rev. Michael Papesh)