

Homily: 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Zec 9: 9-10; Ps 145; Rom 8: 9, 11-13; Mt 11: 25-30

***“The Beautiful Spiritual Fruits of Embracing the Yoke of the Lord”***

At first when we think about what Jesus says at the end of the Gospel today, it doesn't make much sense. Life in this world is tough, esp. if you sincerely try to follow Jesus and His teaching, and it seems to get tougher as the years go on. What is Jesus saying here?

1. **All of us face many challenges in life.** On our own we can deal with them for a while and sometimes for quite a while if we are in good physical health, of sound mind, and resourceful and shrewd in how we interrelate with others. However there comes a point in our life, if we are honest, when we hit the proverbial “brick wall.” It's a dead end - we wonder if our life has any real meaning or purpose. It is then that the mercy of God can transform us, if open our heart to Him. When we experience God's compassionate love for us as an individual, it changes our outlook on life. Then and only then do we see that what Jesus says today is true, *“Come to me, all of 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.”* I remember the times in my life when this happened to me when going through some very difficult things; it is always then that I felt the tug of God on my heart which led me to really **pray in the depths of my heart**, and be drawn to **the Sacrament of Confession** to unburden my soul of many things that were distancing me from the Lord's love. Then I experienced the sweet peace and the inner freedom that only comes from the Lord and His healing grace. It's amazing. This holds true for all of us, and it's not a one-time deal. Jesus's Merciful Heart is always the source of living water welling up to eternal life. **So, the first aspect of this mysterious teaching of Jesus is accepting His personal love.**
2. Once we accept the Lord's personal love for us, even though at times in our weakness we think we are unlovable, then we are much more likely to entrust our life and our heart to Him. The beauty of the image of Jesus's Divine Mercy should remind us of this. It is in entrusting ourselves to Jesus's merciful love for each of us that we come to know God as He truly is: the fullness of Love & Mercy & Truth & Goodness & Justice. One of the hardest things to do as a human being is to trust others: much of

*human sin and problems flow from this sad reality.* The counter to this tendency is to give our heart over to the Lord more each day. **How do we do this on a practical level? By embracing God's permissive will in our lives.** What do I mean by that? Well, each day things happen to us that we have no control over. Some things are big: *losing a loved one, losing a job, finding out we have a serious illness.* Some things are smaller, but sometimes very difficult to deal with depending on the state of mind we are in: e.g., *someone makes an insensitive or rude or mean comment to us, someone suddenly infringes upon our "free" time, or makes a request of us that we are not ready to respond to, etc.* All these things potentially disturb our inner peace. The solution is to give it over to God. He permits things to happen to us in life - how do we respond? If over time we can **train our self** to give it to Him in prayer throughout our daily life when unexpected things happen, we will grow in holiness and become more like Jesus who generously accepted what came His way and always gave it over to the Father. **So the second aspect of this mysterious teaching of Jesus is accepting the permissive will of the Father in our life - knowing He loves us.**

3. Finally, if we want to embrace Jesus's teaching that if we accept His "**yoke**", meaning His way of life, which He promises will lead to inner peace and freedom, we must continue to grow in union with Him each day. I previously mentioned two ways of doing this: **one** by accepting His personal compassionate merciful love for each of us, and then **secondly** by accepting the things that come our way as part of our Heavenly Father's permissive will. **Now we are called to thirdly pray that God reveals Himself to us more deeply in the depths of our soul.** The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity begins in our Baptism, and continues throughout our life - if we don't turn our back on God by mortal sin, or allow smaller sins to dull or weaken our connection with Him. This is why we need to receive the Lord's Body and Blood in the Eucharist with great faith, reverence, and never in conscious mortal sin because it is in Holy Communion that the inner life of the Blessed Trinity is increased in our soul - which is the seed of eternal life. The other Sacraments bring this about as well. **The reality of the Divine Indwelling** is the source of *true inner peace, freedom and joy* - even amid external sorrows and difficulties. Let's embrace the Lord's yoke. God bless you.