

9 July 2017 (14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 144(145):1-2,8-11,13b-14; Romans 8:9,11-13; Matthew 11:25-30.

**Come to me,... and I will give you rest.**

Jesus praises the Father for showing himself to the little ones, and not to the wise. Within the community of Matthew a distinction was drawn between the Scribes and the Pharisees (the learned and clever) and the Christians (the infants). The Scribes and the Pharisees were the ones who studied the Law and understood it in all its details; they are the ones who should have known most about God and recognised Jesus as the Messiah, instead they were the ones who refused to follow him. The Jewish Christian members of the community of Matthew were the new comers, the little ones, who accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus blesses the Father because he willed this to happen.

Jesus invites us to come to him and follow him and he will lead us to the Father. It is very important to learn about God, it is essential to have a good knowledge of the scriptures and of the catechism of the Church, but it is even more important to enter into a deep personal relationship with God nurtured in prayer. The learned and clever person can approach God with an inquisitive mind and might not always be open to accept who God is; the little one (infant / child) is open to listen to and accept God's message. Like the early Christians who were open to listen to the teachings of Jesus, we are invited to approach God with simplicity of heart.

In last week's gospel Jesus warned us that to follow him as a disciple was not an easy option. He insisted that we needed to take up and fully embrace our cross of discipleship and follow him. In this Sunday's gospel Jesus tells us not to be afraid of this cross that discipleship brings along with it. Instead he invites us to take up his own yoke, because it is easy and his burden is light.

The image of an easy yoke and a light burden seems contradictory! What can Jesus mean by these images? Very often poorer farmers who did not own a pair of oxen, would harness together under one yoke an ox and a donkey. While it would have been difficult for the donkey to do the ploughing on its own, once harnessed in the same yoke with the stronger ox, it could be of help and the work got done. This is the image of a yoke Jesus presents to us his disciples. He himself is already carrying the yoke and encourages us to take up our place as the second animal under the yoke. This way, he will be doing the heavy lifting and we help along the way! Thus the yoke becomes easy and the burden light.

Jesus wants to share his life with us. Although it is not easy to be a disciple, yet Jesus promises to be there with us and to help us along the way. He invites us to approach him with our burdens and lay them on him; he invites us to approach him as little children approach a loving parent, and entrust ourselves to him. It is as little children that we can best be disciples and best enter into this deep relationship with Jesus and the Father.

Let us trust Jesus and continue in our journey of discipleship.

Fr Mario