

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 09

Zec 9:9-10 Ps144:1-2,8-11,13-14 Rm 8:9,11-13 Mt 11:25-30

“My yoke is easy, and my burden light”

Thank God its July! Schools are closed, first communions and confirmations are over, Pastoral council meetings have temporarily ended and it's the time for more joyful weddings, and less sorrowful funerals. We might even call it summer! The pastoral rhythm has slowed. Appropriately the readings present us with an upbeat message of peace, holy joy, external gladness and an invitation to 'rest'. In contrast to previous emphases on the cost and demands of discipleship, today's readings suggest that real faith is simple, uncomplicated and life affirming.

Jesus contrasts this simple trusting childlike faith with that of the religious specialists – those who have burdened others with legalism and the minutiae of religion.

There is a clear assertion that faith is ultimately the gift of God. It is not achieved by human effort or reasoning. Our understanding of our faith follows its acquisition. Faith seeking understanding (theology) rests on our pre-existing faith. The development of a complex understanding of faith can become a burden, rather than a help in our faith journey.

All of us live within the tension between the perceived simplicity and priorities of the early church and the extremely complex structures and competing understandings of our faith in the present institutional church. Realists among us accept this shift as the unfortunate, but inevitable consequence of the power of the church becoming institutionalised. Yet the message of Christ in the Gospel is clear – the core of our faith is simple – to recognise God as Creator, Christ as Saviour and our purpose to be with God eternally by loving God and neighbour. Everything else in religious and theological terms is the superstructure built upon that concise foundation.

The Gospel contrasts the heavy burden of the “yoke of the law” that was placed on the Jews by their religious establishment, with the light burden Jesus offers his followers. Like the yoke placed around the oxen which was carefully shaped to suit particular animals, ensuring that the load was shared and they worked effectively and efficiently so the burdens we carry are appropriate to our strengths and shared with our community of Faith, We do not rely on our own strength, on ourselves alone. Instead of the arrogance that encourages delusions of self-sufficiency, Christ suggests the humility and trust that opens us to experience that personal deep peace which comes from trust in Gods' personal plan for each of us and for the world. We are invited to 'rest' in Him - in his promise of the renewal of our drooping spirit, of his strength to cope with our unique burdens, enabling us to be people of joy and hope, not because we seek refuge in a simple 'childish' faith that avoids the challenges of our time, but precisely because our faith allows us to find meaning and purpose since we see beyond those 'burdens' to the guaranteed Kingdom of peace, fulfilment and contentment.

“I will give your rest.....you will find rest for your souls”