

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2011

The readings of this Sunday invite us to reflect on the reality of human life with its burdens and contradictions, and on what, in the midst of all this, Jesus can do for us.

The first reading describes the joyful prophecy of Zechariah to the people of Israel. At that time, indeed, Israel was under the dominion of a foreign power. Everything was so bad that the people had no hope for the recovery and no prospect of the future.

In the middle of all this, the prophet comes to them with a message of joy, namely that the Lord is about to visit them and put an end to their suffering. He will banish all the weapons used in war, proclaim peace to the nations and reign over the whole world. He will not come to his people like a powerful king riding on a horse, but rather like a just savior, meek and riding on an ass.

What is behind this text is the idea that God consoles his people anytime they are in distress. Whatever might be the severity of their suffering and the length of their distress, the time will come when God will put an end to it. That time will be a moment of rejoicing and joy when God consoles his people.

The text also creates a contrast between the rulers of this world and God's rule. While the rulers of this world impose their power over their people, God's rule is that of peace and liberation. Unlike human rule that is eager power, God's rule is that of service to the defenseless and the needy. It is that contrast that designs the contour of the Messianic rule of Jesus in the Gospel.

First of all, Jesus thanks the Father for all the things he has revealed, not to the wise and the learned of this world, but to the little ones. The wise and the learned stand for the intellectuals who are self-sufficient. Because, they are such, they have no need of listening to the word of God or of learning more about God. Unlike these, the little ones are those who are humble and simple of heart.

By declaring this, is Jesus condemning the intellectual power? Not at all. What he is condemning is the intellectual pride that pushes some people to systematically reject God and everything related to him. In fact, most of the time, the learned tend to reject the Gospel, while the simple people easily accept it. That was true in the time of Jesus, as it is today.

And yet, Jesus is sent by the Father into the world in order to teach us about him. The Father handed over all things to him so that, if we really want to know something about God, there is no other way than to go through Jesus. In that perspective, we can say that Jesus is the lieutenant of God. He represents God. His face is God's face; his attitude toward humans is God's attitude as well as his concerns for the world are God's concerns.

All that helps us understand why Jesus is inviting us to come to him with all the burdens of our life so that he gives us rest. This invitation is given to anyone among us who is exhausted with the search for the truth and does not see anymore how he/she can make it by himself/herself. It is given to those who are overwhelmed with problems and do not know where to go. It is given to those who fought for so long that now they just are tired of fighting.

Most of the time, when people have done everything they should without finding a solution to their problem, they tend to be discouraged and give up. In the worst case, some stop fighting and even stop believing in God. And yet, these difficult situations can become a wonderful opportunity for God to bless us and give us relief. But, in order for that blessing and relief to happen, we have to turn to Jesus and stop fighting alone. That is why, Jesus is asking us to offer him our hardships and problems so that he may give us rest. He is asking us to come to him and entrust our problems to him.

If we do so, we will certainly have some peace, because Jesus will share everything with us. It does not mean that all our problems will be resolved once and for all, but at least we can be sure that we are not fighting not alone, but with Jesus.

Moreover, Jesus is inviting us to share in his yoke by taking it upon us so that we might find rest for ourselves. In the Jewish society, indeed, a yoke was a wooden crosspiece attached to the necks of two oxen in order to plough or to draw a wagon. The yoke allowed the two animals to pull together without being exhausted by the burden of the work.

In that perspective, when Jesus invites us to take his yoke so that the burden might be “light”, he wants to tell us that when we entrust ours problems to him, he becomes our teammate who bears everything with us. Like in the case of the two oxen, he takes the other side of the yoke and provides for us the grace we need to live without being exhausted. Of course, we can always get tired with our problems, but we will not be destroyed.

That relief that Jesus gives us is not something limited only to this life, but rather to the whole of our living. That is why when we share in the yoke of Jesus and are united with him, he gives us eternal life. As St Paul says, if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, God will give us life, too.

But, this can happen only if we trust Jesus and live by his rules. However, if we live according to the spirit of the world, we lose everything. That is why it is important to live, not according to the flesh or the world, but rather to the Spirit of Jesus. In other words, by being Christ-centered and not world-centered, we prepare ourselves for the eternal life. Let us, then, ask God to give us in this celebration the Spirit of courage so that we accept to share our problems with Jesus. Let us ask him to help us take the yoke of Jesus and find our peace in him. May God bless you all!

**Zechariah 9, 9-10; Romans 8, 9, 11-13; Matthew 11, 25-30**



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