

Homily for the 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time, A, July 5, 2020

“Come to me all of you who are burdened ...”

What is the heaviest burden you ever carried? Think about it, what is the heaviest burden that you have ever carried? I bet most people would not think of anything physically hard to carry but what is mentally hardest to carry. For some, the burden is loss and grief at the death of a loved one but others the breakdown of a marriage or more probably the burden of ill health, chronic pain fatigue, etc. For still others the fear of losing a job or home due to this year of the coronavirus. Yes, these and many others are frightening fears we may have. None of us goes looking for these burdens that weigh us down and which may break our spirit but we know we live in this valley of tears and no one can escape the burdens of life.

And though we may often pray that God lift us from these burdens, that’s not what Jesus promises in today’s Gospel. What Jesus promises is to always remain present with us. Our burdens are not eased because these problems go away, the burdens become light because Jesus is always with us, helping us to carry them. Listen to these comforting words of today: *“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 is light.”*

These are some of the most beautiful and comforting words in the Bible. But they might not mean much if you do not know what a yoke is. A yoke is a wooden frame, with a bar and a collar-like piece at the ends, which is attached to the necks of two animals, usually oxen. By binding these two animals together the yoke makes them stronger. Two oxen working together to pull a plow or a till are much stronger than one of them working alone. So, when Jesus says: “Take my yoke upon you, he is offering to attach himself to us and

inviting us to attach ourselves to him. And if we have Jesus helping us to carry these burdens that we have in life, there is nothing that we cannot handle. There is no burden so great that it cannot be eased by the grace and help of Jesus.

Too often we want to go it alone, you and me; we do not want to ask for help from God or from anyone else. But, if we are honest and meek and humble of heart, we must admit that we are dependent on God and dependent on others for most of everything in life. Today and always, Jesus invites us more and more to depend on him, to trust in him, to lay our burdens on him. Jesus is a gift, given to us out of love, a gift from the Father who never wants us to be alone in life, especially in our suffering and pain.

Take Jesus up on this offer. Turn to him in prayer and allow him to carry you. Perhaps try to find Jesus present in the gift of a helping hand, a good listener, an easy day, an unexpected bonus, a moment of peace and quiet.

Remember we may be burdened, yes, but we are never alone!