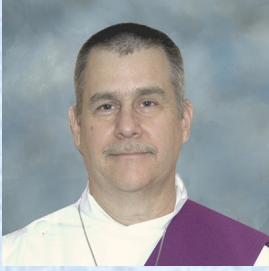


## Homily Rerun: July 9, 2017, (Deacon Bruce)



Our Gospel today starts out with a beautiful prayer of praise and thanksgiving from Jesus to the Father, and then Jesus tells all of us who labor and are burdened to come to Him for rest. I can only speak for myself and what I have observed but I think that “all who labor and are burdened” includes us all. Jesus is giving us a model to follow. Come to God in prayers of praise and thanksgiving for all He has given us and then offer our burdens to Him.

I believe most of us are carrying some sort of heavy burden these days. Anxieties and fears burden us all, the list seems both overwhelming and endless. So as we labor under these many burdens, we are here today at Mass and we’ve just heard Jesus say to us: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest.”** (Matthew 11:28) How could anyone not be attracted to what Jesus offers us? And yet, why is He so ignored by so many who are not here?

Most of the time we tend to take matters in our own hands. If we have a problem or something that is bothering us, we immediately try to fix it. When we take matters into our own hands, try to control things we cannot control, we are, as St. Paul puts it in our second reading, **“living in the flesh.”** But St. Paul tells us, **“You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”** (Romans 8:9) Our Lord is suggesting that, first, we put our troubles and burdens in His hands. We first entrust them to Him, then wait and see what He is going to suggest. We might be surprised at the solution that He comes up with. But we are so often impatient and want a solution right now. Remember when Jesus said, **“Ask and it will be given to you”** (Matthew 7:7) He never said, **“immediately.”**

As a carpenter Jesus would have been asked to make a wooden yoke for farmers so that they could hook two oxen together to pull a farm implement together. The yoke was the wooden crossbeam that joined two animals at the shoulders and that crossbeam dragged the farm implement. Since animals are different sizes, it was common to have a yoke cut to measure for the animals pulling it. Otherwise it would not fit the animal correctly and could cause considerable discomfort and affect the work they accomplished. Sometimes an older, larger, and stronger animal was teamed with a younger animal so that the younger one could learn from the older one. When not evenly matched, the stronger animal takes most of the burden, yet the weaker one does supply some of the work so the task can be completed. Jesus is offering to be yoked together with us. He is offering to take most of the weight and to help us with our burdens and to guide our path.

If we do not go to Jesus when we are burdened with life’s problems, to whom or to what do we go? If we do not look for answers to our problems in Jesus, we will not find them elsewhere or else we will just find partial or misleading answers. The answers of the culture of our time are false and misleading, because the culture of our time tells us we will find happiness in sin. But sin never brings happiness because sin is sin. Therefore the culture of this time wants to lay upon us a yoke of sin. This yoke is heavy and painful and leads to life away from God.

The prophecy of Zechariah in our first reading about the king riding on a donkey was fulfilled in Jesus riding into Jerusalem the week before his Passion and death. Jesus proclaims peace to you; will you accept His peace? Open your heart and pray to Jesus. If you do not spend time with Jesus how can you find His peace? Spend time in prayer every day to find His peace. Come to Jesus here in the Eucharist. You cannot find Jesus in the Eucharist anywhere but here at Mass.

Jesus says that He will give us rest. Part of living in the Spirit is taking time out for prayer and for rest. A wise priest once said that the only things you are supposed to do on Sunday is pray, play, and obey. I have found in my own life, I can do all three at the same time. We need to take time out from our week to make time for family.

We should all try to make an effort to make Sunday the day that revolves around family, first around Our Father in heaven – going to church as a family. Spend some quality time with God. Next, plan something fun with your family. It doesn’t need to be something expensive – the beach is free. Just go to the park. Or take a hike. (I’ve been told to do that many times.) Just spend some quality time with your family. Don’t make Sunday the day you try to get all of the things done that you didn’t get done during the week. Truly make it a day of rest. This will help calm your spirit and allow you to approach the coming week rested and refreshed.

Live according to the Spirit, not according to the flesh. Open your heart to Jesus. Walk every day yoked to the Lord in prayer and meet him in the Eucharist. Listen to his invitation.

**“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 light.”** (Matthew 11:28-30)