

“Come to me and Learn from Me”

Friends, have you ever felt overburdened with life situations? How often do you get angry and frustrated under the burdens of life? Sometimes, fear and anxiety about your health and wellbeing can be a burden too heavy to carry. Other times, fear for your families and your children’s future be burdensome; or struggle about job insecurity and financial future, challenges and demands in workplaces, trials in caring an aged parent with Alzheimer’s or a child with disability, ongoing conflicts in married life etc. can make your life burdened. What solutions do you have? Today’s gospel offers a very appealing answer to this. There are two invitations coming to us: “come to me”; “learn from me”. There’s nothing magical about these words, but there is power through them, because they’re God’s words. If you listen, change starts to happen, anxious thoughts begin to diminish. We can let go worry with its constant grip.

Why should we go to Him? His answer is, “I shall give you rest”. And I guarantee you friends, this is not a fake promise! Because, whoever went to Him, got answers. The sick got healed, the blind regained sight, the sinners were forgiven, because He is faithful in His promises. He is asking us to do only two things: to “take his yoke” & “learn from Him”.

I realize how unfamiliar we are with the image of a yoke. Even agricultural communities are so mechanized that yokes are no longer used. A yoke is a means of governing an animal and linking two animals for greater strength. We have to go to Third World countries to see a real yoke. And when we see the real yoke, we cannot imagine willingly taking on a yoke. The idea is totally counter to our love of personal freedom. I want to do it all my way. I resist bondage, and to consider going under a yoke is a stretch that challenges me.

“Take my yoke upon you.” The yoke has many implications. The first thing: He is going to carry your burden with you. When the burden is equally shared, the journey is easier, because you are not going to carry it all alone.

Secondly, taking the yoke of Jesus means, bringing under control our passions and desires for the immoral and ungodly practices of the world. The nature of

our culture makes the desires of the flesh so accessible that immorality is rampant and almost totally acceptable. The yoke that draws to holy living often seems oppressive to the young and spiritually immature, but Jesus says the yoke is easy. In perspective the yoke is easy because it brings none of the guilt and suffering that comes with immoral actions. Ultimately, it is “surrendering to God’s will”.

He asks us also to learn from Him, because He is ‘meek and humble of heart’. To take His yoke, you need ‘humility’. What is true humility and why should we embrace it? True humility is not having a low opinion of yourself, or thinking of yourself as inferior to others.

Humility is truth in self-understanding and truth in action. Viewing ourselves truthfully, with sober judgment, means seeing ourselves the way God sees us. A humble person makes a realistic assessment of oneself without illusion or pretense to be something one is not. A truly humble person regards oneself as neither smaller nor larger than one truly is. True humility frees us to be ourselves as God sees us and to avoid despair and pride. A humble person does not want to wear a mask or put on a facade in order to look good to others. Such a person is not carried away by fame, reputation, success, or failure.

When our own importance is not recognized by others, we can become sad, depressed, angry, or contemptuous. There are two practical ways to respond to these promptings of envy or misguided self-criticism.

-When we see something, another has and we don’t, we can respond with humility rather than humiliation. Humility sees the truth. The other really has received some gift we have not. Learn to appreciate it.

-A second good response is admiration at the good the other possesses. Why admiration? It can encourage us to do more or better. For example, the one who has excelled over me has so much more energy. So, I want to cultivate the energy God has given me and even find ways to increase it so I can do better. *Story: (A little girl became restless during Sunday Mass, as the preacher’s sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?")*