

## **HOMILY for 14<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A**

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us about coming to Jesus if we feel stressed out & overburdened by our life issues. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

In a monastery, there was a strict order of monks who lived by a rule that permitted speaking only once on one day a year, one monk per year. When the day came around, the monk whose turn it was stood up & said, "I don't like the mashed potatoes here, they're too lumpy." And he sat down.

A year later, another monk stood up & said, "I rather like the mashed potatoes here, they're very tasty."

Another year went by & it was a third monk's turn. He stood up & said, "I'm leaving the monastery. I can't stand this constant bickering!"

We can certainly be stressed out by all the fights around us. Anyway, in today's Gospel, we learn that Jesus made the following prayer to God the Father, "Father, Lord of Heaven & earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned & the clever you have revealed to the merest children." That prayer tells us that God evidently has kept certain secrets from the educated & revealed them to the child-like folks. In other words, the educated & the clever don't seem to understand & figure out the divine plans for the Universe. They certainly cannot comprehend matters related to the soul & the world beyond the current one. However, people with child-like faith can have a special connection with God & understand all religious matters. They seem to possess a unique skill that allows them to decode matters about God & the soul.

For example, most of Jesus' twelve apostles were not educated. In fact, many of them were fishermen. But, they were able to understand the urgent mission of Jesus & answer His call to follow Him. Similarly, many Marian apparitions around the world have evidently been revealed to people with child-like faith such as the ones in France, Portugal, & Mexico. Those witnesses of Marian apparitions have been school-age children. You might have your own reasons as to why Mary has decided to appear to children instead of well-educated adults. But, I think the reason Mary has chosen to reveal herself children is because of they are open-minded & they have simple faith. They do not question faith-related revelations & try to make sense out of everything. Instead, they let Mary or God lead them to a world that we can see & understand only with the faith vision. So, if we'd like to have a glimpse of the secret world of Heaven & understand religious matters, we got to have the simple faith & vision of the children.

Once we have that faith & vision, Jesus reveals us this important message in today's Gospel, "...Come to me, all you who are weary & find life burdensome, & I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders & learn from me, for I am gentle & humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy & my burden light." First, Jesus invites everyone who finds life too wearisome & overwhelmed to come to Him. For He promises to refresh them & bring them relief. Does anyone here not feel weary & burdened about one's daily life? From the moment we wake up to the time we lay down to rest, we are worried about many things such as our basic necessities, shelters, vehicles, health, families & friends, & so on. We are also overburdened by daily responsibilities like taxes, maintenance of vehicles & homes, relationships, etc. I'm sure you could name other worries & burden that you might have to face

in your daily life. If we feel a bit worried about something, or overburdened by some life issue, Jesus today wants us to come to Him; for He promises to bring us relief & solutions for our problems.

Besides the daily worries & typical burden, recently we have heard a lot about mental health & how it might affect our daily life in a consequential way. The number of suicide & depression cases has alarmingly risen lately. The good news is that we have begun to identify hidden problems that might negatively influence our mental wellbeing even though we have stopped short of naming them spiritual problems. For me, mental health is closely connected to spiritual wellbeing. We cannot separate one from the other. It's just a matter of time before we have to admit that we need to take good care of our spiritual life if we want to have good mental health. As you might know, currently we do not have any medicine or concrete solutions for our mental health. So, it's a blessing today to hear Jesus' invitation for us to come to Him & find relief & solutions if we have mental health & spiritual problems. Hopefully, we will take advantage of His welcoming & approach Him often for help.

However, His suggestion of providing us a solution for our burden & weary heart is a bit unorthodox. Jesus apparently tells us to put His yoke on our shoulders & thence our souls will find peace. If we have ever seen a yoke on the shoulder of an ox or a buffalo, we'd see that it adds weight & heavy burden on the animal. There's no way that we'd feel relieved & peaceful if we put a yoke on ourselves. That just increases more burden & stress on us. But, a yoke of Jesus is not there to weigh us down. Rather, once we put it on, He'll be able to lift us up & help us deal with our life burden. We'll be able to find support & comfort from a caring friend like Jesus. He'll listen to our problems & worries & help us find solutions for them. He'll restore peace to our weary souls & send us help from caring people around us. Sometimes those solutions might come from unexpected sources. They might take time & test our patience. However, in God's plan & due time, He'll bring us relief & make our souls feel at peace.

My dear brothers & sisters, none of us can have a worry-free life on earth. Every day we encounter one challenge after another. Some days we might be less worried while other ones might make us feel overwhelmed & push us toward a dark valley. Thankfully, Jesus has come to our aid & invite us to transfer that burden over to Him. That way He can help us find solutions for our problems & bring our souls relief. So, why don't we come to Him with our burden & let Him restore us to good mental & spiritual wellbeing?