

**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time- A: "Come to Me... and You Will Find Rest.":** Zec 9:9-10; Rom 8:9, 11-13; Mt 11:25-30

Yesterday, as our nation celebrated Independence Day, many Americans heard the famous words inscribed on the Statue of Liberty by Emma Lazarus: *"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."* Those words express a welcome to people seeking freedom and hope.

Today, Jesus offers something even greater. He says in the Gospel: **"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."** Jesus opens not just the golden door of a nation but the door of God's Kingdom, inviting everyone who is weary to find peace in Him.

In the first reading, the prophet Zechariah announces a surprising King. He does not come riding a powerful war horse but a humble donkey. He comes not to conquer by force but to conquer hearts with peace, mercy, and love. This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, the gentle King who brings lasting peace rather than temporary victories.

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that there are two ways to live: according to the flesh or according to the Spirit. Living according to the flesh means allowing selfishness, anger, greed, and fear to control our lives. These become heavy burdens that steal our peace. But living according to the Spirit brings freedom, hope, and the strength to live as children of God.

Then Jesus gives us one of the most comforting invitations in all of Scripture: **"Come to me... Take my yoke upon you... and you will find rest for your souls."** At first this sounds strange. A yoke is something placed on animals to help them pull a load. Why would Jesus replace one burden with another?

The answer is simple. Jesus does not remove every difficulty from our lives, but He never asks us to carry them alone. When we accept His yoke, we are yoked with Him. He walks beside us, carries the greater weight, and gives us the strength we do not have by ourselves. His yoke is the yoke of love. Love does not make life free from suffering, but it gives suffering meaning and makes even heavy burdens lighter.

Think about a child carrying a heavy bag. When the father takes hold of the bag and carries most of the weight, the child still walks, but the burden becomes much lighter. That is exactly what Jesus does for us.

Many people today carry heavy burdens: worries about family, illness, financial struggles, loneliness, guilt, anxiety, or grief. Jesus invites us to place all these burdens into His hands. Every time we come to prayer, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we bring our tired hearts to the altar. There, Christ strengthens us, forgives us, and fills us with His peace.

As Christians, we are also called to help lighten the burdens of others. A kind word, a listening ear, forgiveness, encouragement, or helping someone in need can become the way Christ gives rest to another person through us.

Let us hear Jesus speaking personally to each one of us: **"Come to me."** Let us leave behind the unnecessary burdens of sin, resentment, and fear. Let us accept His gentle yoke of love and allow the Holy Spirit to guide our lives. Then we will discover the true freedom that no nation can give and no one can take away—the peace and rest that come from Christ alone. Amen