

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 9, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10

Thus says the LORD: Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass. He shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

### Psalms: Ps 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14

R. (cf. 1) I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

I will extol you, O my God and King,  
and I will bless your name forever and ever.  
Every day will I bless you,  
and I will praise your name forever and ever.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and of great kindness.  
The LORD is good to all  
and compassionate toward all his works.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,  
and let your faithful ones bless you.  
Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom  
and speak of your might.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

The LORD is faithful in all his words  
and holy in all his works.  
The LORD lifts up all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

### Second Reading: Romans 8:9, 11-13

Brothers and sisters: You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Consequently, brothers and sisters, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

### Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

At that time Jesus exclaimed: "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"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."



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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Jesus' words in this week's Gospel are consoling: *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.* A great comfort, these promises. Whenever death or loss or suffering descend upon us, there is a safe place to go. But aren't these words hard to trust? The alternative viewpoint is given by Dylan Thomas, the poet. He was not wiser than Jesus, of course, but he wrote this to his dying father: *Do not go gentle into that good night, Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light.* \*Rage is quite different from rest, isn't it? In the same poet's great poem, "Fern Hill," Thomas says, *Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means, time held me green and dying though I sang in my chains like the sea.* Green and dying. Chains. Dylan Thomas was a raggedy man, who, if rumor is true, drank himself to the death he dreaded. He loved his youth and sang glad song to it, but death always stood waiting, and it could not break the chains death wrapped around him. Jesus also said his yoke was easy, but he went through torture and death. How can this be?

### **If we can begin to let go into the arms of the Great Love, if we can give our life away, we might find rest from our burdens.**

Here is an approach. Maybe labor and burdens are not meant to be erased from our lives, not expunged or thrown away. Instead maybe they are meant to be pathways to a solid ground far underneath our troubles, into a quiet grounding where there is real stillness and rest. What quiet grounding? Jesus says it is meekness and humility of heart. In the desert Jesus had already told the devil that the only food Jesus needed was "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Maybe the only real goods in life are those rooted firmly in the love that is God, together with meekness and humility, which are Jesus' life. "Watch me," he says. "I am meek, and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass" (First Reading). Here is a paraphrase of the rest: Watch me on the sad height of Calvary and see. I have let it all go—belongings, beloveds, reputation, all. One thing remains. In it I find my rest. Make it your life, whatever your sorrow is, whatever act of living and of dying and being burdened you suffer. It will not be heavy. This is the center of my life and the reason my burden is light. Love of God, received and given. If we can begin to let go into the arms of the Great Love, if we can give our life away—as an alternative to raging—we might find rest from our burdens. We might see that death is the ultimate act of giving ourselves away. Jesus did this, in the midst of his burdens. Meek and humble of heart he was, not proud and above it all. Try it: take your troubles and release them gratefully to the one who can give you rest.

\*Do Not Go Gentle, by Dylan Thomas

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. How approachable are you? Do humility and meekness have any bearing on a person's approachability? When did Jesus enter the city "riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey"?
2. "The Spirit of God dwells in you." What does this imply about the wonder and holiness of your spirit? Could it help you reverence your neighbor?
3. A carpenter hand-made the yoke to fit the animal that wore it. Is your yoke handmade for you? If yes, who "makes" it? How does Jesus speak about his yoke in Sunday's Gospel?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who in the abasement of your Son have raised up a fallen world, fill your faithful with holy joy, for on those you have rescued from slavery to sin you bestow eternal gladness. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen