

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Cycle A

Zechariah 9: 9-10
Romans 8: 9, 11-13
Matthew 11: 25-30

(An unlit candle and a bible open to this week's gospel rest on a table in the gathering place)

OPENING PRAYER

(The candle is lit. The leader invites members to some minutes of silent awareness of the presence of God. After some time of quiet, members pray in two alternating groups.)

- I: Give thanks to the LORD for he is good,
for his love endures forever.
- II: I called to the LORD in my distress, he answered and freed
me. The LORD is at my side; I do not fear.
What can men do against me?
The LORD is at my side as my helper.
I shall look down on my foes.
- I: I was hard-pressed and was failing but the LORD came to help
me. The LORD is my strength and my song. He is my savior.
- II: O LORD, grant us salvation
O LORD, grant us success
Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
The LORD God is our light.
- I: Go forward in procession with branches even to the altar.
You are my God, I thank you.
My God I praise you.

II: Give thanks to the LORD for he is good;
for his love endures forever.

Adapted from Psalm 118

(Members pause for a time of silence.)

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

COMMENTARY

In today's gospel Jesus tells us, "Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light."

This gospel is read frequently during the Mass of Christian Burial. It may, in fact, be the most frequently proclaimed gospel passage. It may seem ironic to some that during times of excruciating grief we should talk of an easy yoke or of rest and a light burden.

A yoke is used to join and permit two oxen to pull a load much heavier than a single animal could pull. If we accept Jesus' yoke we have to consider with whom we are yoked. We are united with Christ. He is with us through the most difficult of times. When we accept the yoke of Jesus, we feel the joy and peace of his presence in our lives. Jesus tells us to turn our fears, our worries, our grief over to him. Trust in him. Turn it all over to the Lord. He walks step by step with us and will not desert us.

For departed loved ones we have cherished, certainly we grieve, but that grief is tinged with joy because we know that Jesus has not left them. We know that in their new life, they are even more united with him. They are at rest in the peace of Christ. Come to me all you who are weary and I will give

you rest. Come to me all you who find life burdensome and I will give you new life. This is Jesus' promise to us. This is the promise of the resurrection.

This gospel speaks to us, of course, not only when we grieve the loss of one who has come to the end of the journey in this life. It speaks as well to each of us as we travel on life's road. Yoked to Christ, we cannot ever travel alone. By God's gracious will, Jesus carries our burden with us.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How have you felt Christ's presence in difficult times?
- ◆ When recently have you felt the joy and peace of Jesus in your life?
- ◆ How often have you felt you were carrying life's burden alone? When has your being yoked to another helped that person carry a burden?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week to acknowledge some thing that is troubling you. Acknowledge, too, Jesus' presence in your life. Know that he is yoked with you. Accept his peace even as you carry your burden.
- ◆ Act against the scourge of human trafficking, slave trade by another name. Learn about this horror and how you can help to address this situation at humantrafficking.org or call Andrea Bertone at 202-884-8916.
- ◆ Reach out to another in grief over the loss of a loved one or some other loss in life. A simple promise of your prayers lets the other know they do not walk alone.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The community joins in singing, "I am the Bread of Life," The song may be found on the Internet. Following the song, the leader invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer members respond, "Come to us, Lord, who labor and are burdened Give us your rest." When these prayers are complete, the community prays as follows.)

Leader: Father, creator and ruler of heaven and earth, you made man in your likeness to subdue the earth and master it and to recognize the work of your hands in created beauty. Grant that your children thus surrounded on all sides by signs of your presence may live continually in Christ, praising you through him and with him.

Christian Prayer: *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Evening prayer
fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

All: Amen.

(Members exchange a sign of peace.)

