

**ORDINARY SUNDAY XVI “A”**  
**JULY 5/6, 2014**

The invitation of Jesus to: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28) are surely some of the most consoling, comforting, supportive and hopeful words in the Gospels. In a world and in our personal lives marked by stresses, anxieties, burdens of many sorts, they remind us that God is not a far-off deity who gazes detachedly at our plight from a heaven above the clouds, but chooses in Jesus to share our human journey. As I reflected on these words of Jesus an image of God as a spouse, parent or friend who gently, but firmly, holds a hurt, frightened, confused, or grief stricken child, spouse, friend, or other individual in a secure grasp as that other cries into their shoulder for support and whispers words of comfort or simply offers the strength of their silent presence in the face of life’s hurts, injustices, and unexplainable tragedies readily came to mind.

Jesus utters the words in today’s gospel at the end of the section in St. Matthew’s Gospel known as the “Missionary Discourse.” Jesus sends his disciples out to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. At the same time he warns them that they and their mission will face opposition. In the verses preceding today’s Gospel, Jesus himself faces opposition, ridicule and rejection from the people and towns into which he has proclaimed the Reign of God.

In the face of this rejection, Jesus utters a prayer in which he draws his disciples, the “little ones”, into the inner circle of his own intimate relationship with God the Father, “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Mt. 11:27). God is not the CEO of a corporation, but rather a loving father or mother who sees and loves in us the image of himself and interacts with us with great solicitude; one who stands in solidarity with us, even if in the divine plan of creation and human life God cannot prevent us from the sufferings that come with being human both in the natural order of the world or in interaction with fellow human beings.

“Blessed are the meek” (Mt. 5:5) Jesus proclaims in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus reveals himself today as the embodiment of this beatitude and calls us to a like meekness. Unlike the powerful kings of the world who manifest their authority and power by riding

astride a horse or chariot, in the days of the Bible weapons of military might—think today of a tank or an airborne gun ship--God's righteous king comes astride a donkey, a beast of burden, a creature used to carry heavy loads, symbol of this king's identification with all the poor and lowly, the heavily burdened of the world physically, or spiritually through the events of life.

The Meekness of Jesus, and his call to us to a like meekness, is not weakness, as popularly understood. The meek person speaks and acts in mercy for justice advocating the God-given dignity of all human life out of the truth of their own nature as a child of God in the divine image and likeness. The meek person resists evil and works to right the injustices of life not with worldly weapons of violence and vengeance, but with the strength of the Spirit of God which dwells within them as St. Paul reminds us today. The meek person is an "instrument of peace" to all who find themselves stressed, anxious, confused, burdened, because in their own experience of these moments in life, they have found and been consoled by God himself.

As a parish we strive to live this message of today's Scriptures through our Social Justice Committee its subcommittees and their many programs of outreach; the monthly "Black-Bag" and food shelf collection on the third weekend; Stephen Ministry; Bereavement Ministry; our extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion who weekly visit our homebound parishioners. In our daily interactions with others at home, work, or other areas we are all given the opportunity and invitation to "carry one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The ending verses of today's Gospel is one that I suggest we commit to memory for ready recall both in times of personal need and as a reminder of our call as disciples.

**"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" (Mt. 11:27,28).**

**COME TO HIM.**