

July 9, 2023
Cycle A – 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zechariah 9: 9-10

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

Romans 8: 9, 11-13

Matthew 11: 25-30

Notes from Bishop Peter

1. As I indicated last week, when you were baptized, you received the Holy Spirit who continues to live in you and guide you often in ways you don't suspect or expect.
 - a. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we can see life through the eyes of Jesus Christ. This includes our society, world events and the members of our family and close friends as well as human suffering and the need to confront evil where we see it.
 - b. In his letter to the Romans (2nd reading) St. Paul tells us that, "If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through the very same Spirit."
 - Eternal life in us begins when the Holy Spirit enters our heart and soul. We must, however, cooperate with the Spirit, something that can be difficult but worth the effort. More about that later.
 - Paul writes to converts from paganism. Many felt unfulfilled, even depressed after seeking pleasures in sex, food, drink and abusing power for example. They were looking for something that would give their lives meaning rather than pleasures of the flesh that left them feeling empty. Thus, Paul writes: "We are not debtors 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.**"
 - A young engineer in Germany once wrote to a psychiatrist, "I have all the money I need and all the sex I want but my life has no meaning and I am considering ending my life." Thankfully, he found that by helping others, reaching beyond his selfishness, his life did become meaningful.

- Also, the promise of eternal life will burst into glory when we meet the Lord to whom we have tried to be faithful. “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your Master’s joy.”(Matthew 25:23)
2. In all this Jesus demands that we ask for the gift of humility, as I indicated last week. Basically this means that we realize our dependence on God for everything. As St. Paul said, “In him we live and move and exist.” (Acts 17) St. Peter learned this lesson when he told Jesus at the Last Supper that even though the other Apostles would abandon Jesus, he would never do so. We know the result. Subsequently he repented and became a great leader, open to Jesus’ love and his Holy Spirit.
 3. In the Gospel Jesus reveals that he is equal to the Father. Who else could make the claim that “no one knows the Son but the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him?”
 - a. Those who receive with faith the mysteries of God and the Kingdom are the “little ones,” the Apostles and those who are humble and open to absorb the truths that Jesus communicates.
 - The simple people like Bernadette of Lourdes, the three children of Fátima, Juan Diego who saw Our Lady of Guadalupe. “Unless you become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”
 4. Jesus makes the shocking claim: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest.” Who but someone who claims to be God would say this?
 - a. If you do, if you follow me, then your life will have meaning. I can lift you out of your self-loathing and the swamp of your ego to give you rest and direction in your life.
 - b. You will have to carry my yoke but it is easy and my burden is light.
 - Like a good coach who drives her players to help them become the best they can and who cooperate because they know she loves them.
 - c. My yoke includes: Love of God, putting God in the center of your life and of society, love of neighbor as yourself and neighbor includes everyone, and respect for human life at all its stages, from conception to natural death.

5. Eucharist: It is Jesus who invites us to come aside and rest awhile, who promises that we will benefit if we put his demands into practice, and it is Jesus who leads us in joy to the Father who is love.

Amen.