

14th Sunday A: Come to Me (2020)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Our Lord Jesus invites us to come to him all who labor and find life burdensome, and we will find rest (cf. Matt 11:28-30). Who would not like to respond to his invitation at this time of uncertainty?

Jesus already opens the way for us so we can come to him. He came first to us. He fulfills the promise in the old as mentioned in the first reading from the Book of Prophet Zechariah, "Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he" (Zech 9:9).

Unexpectedly, this savior king was born as a helpless baby, growing up under the care of poor parents, being threatened by worldly kings, and rejected by his people. A very compelling reminder of the virtue of humility and on how God embraces our human condition. He came not of grandeur, but he assumed the lowliness of our human state. (All the stain-glass art inside CCST church remind us of this.)

His invitation to come to him becomes profound for those who labor and find life burdensome. In many different ways, we have our labor and burden in life. To use St. Augustine's words, we are mortal people; we carry ourselves as vessels of clay, which cause us many difficulties and restlessness. In this vessel of clay, we struggled, we face our fears and worries, loneliness and darkness, weakness, and failures — these make us restless, but Jesus asks us to bring all these to him, that is, talk it over with him, to pour it out to him. He reassures us that we'll find rest in him, "I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

But the kind of rest that our Lord Jesus offers is not resting from problems nor an absence of them. It is being filled with the presence of God. A life filled with God leads to peace, leads to contentment. When one is filled with God, he or she will be able to breathe calmly and patiently, because of the confidence that he or she is not alone.

But how do we come to Jesus? The words of Jesus in our Gospel direct the way.

First, we come to him like a "little one." We heard that Jesus exalts with joy in prayer, "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 had revealed them to the little ones" (Matt. 11:25). This prayer comes after the story of Chorazin and Betsaida, the two towns that Jesus chastised for taking for granted the message of God. It is but the little ones, a childlike that Jesus acknowledged being the recipient of God's revelation. They are the ones that enter the Kingdom he offers. He said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 28:3).

We come to him with the disposition of a child. This is the way to go — to embrace the spiritual virtue of being small, acknowledging our dependence and trust in the one who is greater, wiser, and more trustworthy. It is likened to fertile soil in which God's grace can take root and grow. It alone takes the right attitude before God and allows him to be all in all.

Secondly, it is to take the yoke of Jesus and learn from him. The yoke of Jesus is this: his love and obedience to the Father -- the source of his overflowing care for us. He carried the burden of our sins because of his love. Being filled with this love makes all burdens light, and if there is a burden, it is no longer a toil but a work of love. Furthermore, the yoke of Jesus is to be filled with the Spirit of God and less with the spirit of the worldly. St. Paul reminds us, "Brothers and sisters: You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit." We are all gifted with the spirit through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. We have the power right within us, the Holy Spirit, who gives us every spiritual gift, and all the strength we need to follow Jesus. We must awaken to this divine power, and we must orient our lives to its transforming grace to increase virtue in us, especially the spiritual virtue of being small -- a childlike.

As we cross half of the year 2020, let us come to the Lord Jesus with the spirit of the "little ones." Let me propose three simple prayers:

- 1) "Thank you, Lord." Let us thank the Lord for everything we have received as we cross the intersection of the middle of the year, whether it was wealth or poverty, good health or illness, joy or pain;
- 2) "Forgive me, Lord." Let us humbly ask God's forgiveness for our wrongdoings, our sins, especially our lack of faith, and hardness of hearts.
- 3) "Bless me, Lord." Let us pray for God's blessing of strength and courage to face the challenges of the uncertainties of our times. Yes, we pray for the solution of the COVID-19 virus, but we all the more pray for God's blessing to simplify our lives and to always desire what is right and holy.

Let us come to him with childlike trust and learn the way of Jesus.

In Christ,

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