

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### THE FRIENDLINESS OF GOD

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Old Testament, God reveals himself first as a God of Might and Power. But gradually He reveals himself as a God of compassion and tenderness. In Christ we receive the perfect revelation of God; He is our Father, He cares, He is concerned: “**...learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart.**” Brothers and sisters, part of Emma Lazarus’ poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty reads: “**Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.... Send these, the homeless tempest-tossed to me.**” What we read in today’s Gospel expresses this message of Emma Lazarus in a more powerful way as they drop from the mouth of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior: “**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.**”

We all know some people who are really friendly. We feel at home with them. When we are with them we can speak our mind freely because we know that they are not easily offended. They are understanding, faithful, hospitable, always ready to help. There are some other people we try to avoid if we can because they are always grumbling, or easily offended, easily prone to anger, and do not like to be disturbed.

God has revealed himself as the friendly person we have described above as we read in the first reading: “**See your King shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass...**” Also, the Responsorial Psalm says: “**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.**”

Such is the nature of our God and so Jesus invites us to embrace the friendliness of our God. He promises that in His presence God offers the **Rest** that we need. When we read the Gospels we experience again and again how Christ is friendly towards everybody he encounters. Jesus is easy to approach; in the Gospels all manner of people flock to him, even sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, and people despised by the community. Christ has time for everybody; your condition in life doesn’t matter to him. He is friendly towards all. So he invites us: “**Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.**” He invites us, as good and caring friend, to come to him with all our worries and problems. He will listen to us with rapt attention and help us.

Brothers and sisters, Paul, understanding this friendly invitation, tells us we can only accept Jesus’ lovely invitation when we recognize the war going on in us and make a choice. The war in us is about the burden of the body and the yoke of the Spirit; it is about the “flesh” and the “Spirit.” St. Paul encourages us, in the second reading, to reject the heavy burden of the body and accept the light yoke of the Spirit, that is, the light yoke which Jesus places on our shoulders, the yoke of **LOVE** and **TRUTH**. We need to live in the realm of the Spirit and not the realm of the flesh.

The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of friendliness and love. Therefore, having been baptized in Christ, we have all put on Christ. But ask yourself: “**Am I friendly towards everybody, even to those who are not so popular? Have I time for people? Am I understanding and sympathetic? Am I ready and willing to support and help others carry their burdens in life? Or do people avoid me?**”