

**14<sup>th</sup> SUNDY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – A July 9<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**Zechariah 9:9-10; Romans 8: 9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Once, two friends, who had not seen each other for long time, met at a mall by chance. They had a lot of things to share, the joys, sorrows, the anxieties, illness, financial loss and so on. At one point one of them commented, “God never allows anyone to be burdened beyond one’s ability.” But the other friend retorted, “Well I don’t think God has checked my load lately.” When we are stressed out and overburdened with many issues we all feel that God has not given any attention to my load lately. But in today’s gospel Jesus offers us a way out. **He says, “Come to me all you labor and are burdened and I will give you rest.”**

If we take the images of God in different world religions, we know that only in Judaism and Christianity we meet a caring, compassionate, loving and forgiving God who sympathizes with the sufferings of His people. He does not take any pleasure in losing a sinner; rather his conversion. In the Old Testament we have the picture of an unapproachable God for ordinary Jew. So Moses and other religious leaders remained as mediators between God and man. But, to the surprise and shock of the Jews, Jesus presented God as our real Father and we should approach God freely as a child approaches his dad. Remember, the Jews considered God as their Father as long as He created human beings. So their relationship with God was nothing but the relationship between the Creator and creature. But Jesus has changed this concept; Jesus calls God, ‘my Father and your Father. He is the Father who is aware of our burdens and ready to carry them with us.

During the time of Jesus the ordinary people were burdened by religious laws and physical labor. They have to work 12 hours in the farms with little pay. As people didn’t have time enough to observe all the religious laws and precepts, they were condemned by the scribes and Pharisees. So Jesus was inviting such overburdened people to learn from him how he could give rest. As we know, Jesus never made so many laws and precepts. His only commandment was, **‘love your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as you love yourself.’** He didn’t ask the poor people to find time to fast three days a week and pray five times a day. Only Jesus could say, **“Go and learn the meaning of the saying, ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice’ (Mt. 9:13).**

In the primitive farming context yoke is the wooden beam placed on the shoulders of two oxen and it is a burden for the animals. At the same time when

two animals are joined with the yoke they share their burden and it becomes half. When Jesus asks us to take his yoke upon us he means that we have to pair with Jesus and he will take half of our burden. In other words, when we submit ourselves totally to Jesus he will share our burden and lighten it.

As we live in this imperfect world and as we too are imperfect beings, nothing perfect can happen in our lives. Very often people don't come up to our expectations. Many of our dreams shatter without being materialized; many of our plans don't work the way we want; we suffer from stress, financial burden, physical ailments and many other personal issues. The interesting thing is that the world offers solution for every problem. We have the science and technology to straighten our physical problems; we have good counselors to ease our stress and we have good financial advisors to take care of our financial problems. We also have got absolute trust in the power of these agencies. So we don't need an unknown power to interfere with our life. Unfortunately, when we are in the dire need of help, these agencies don't come up to our expectations and very often they fail. So, modern man goes into utter disappointment and even depression. As he has gone too far from Jesus he doesn't feel free to approach him.

Jesus says, **“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for yourselves.”** When we pair with Jesus to bear the yoke we will be walking with him side by side. Then we will come to know who he is. He is not like the cruel rulers who put heavy burdens on people. But Jesus is not such a leader he is very meek and humble and above all he is very compassionate and loving. When he shares our burdens they become light for us to bear. You are familiar with the story of the footsteps on the sand. In my difficult times he does not simply walk with us rather he will carry us on his shoulder and walk. So let us take our yoke with Jesus instead of trying to carry it by ourselves. In John's gospel 15:1-8 Jesus explains how important for us to remain with Jesus. Jesus says, **“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”** My dear friends, let us begin our day with Jesus and let us make him a partner in all our activities of the day and finally let us conclude the day with him.