

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
(Zechariah 9:9-10 / Matthew 11:25-30)
06.07.2014

There is something disarming about the word of God addressed to us this morning as it calls upon us to humble ourselves in the cause of peace.

The invitation of the Scriptures is to look to Jesus, meek and humble of heart, in order to identify with His example for our own way of living with, and relating to, each other.

This gospel invitation ties in with an insight given to the prophet Micah that God's People should *walk humbly with the Lord, acting fairly and justly, being gracious in each other's regard, showing gentle mercy in all their dealings.*

It does not come easy to us to live in this way!

When the gospel invites us to *shoulder Christ's yoke* what it is saying is that we should allow Jesus to give direction to our lives; we should allow Him to lead and guide us.

But, so often we prefer to take the lead.

We like to be in charge and hold control.

Sometimes we even attempt to take the Lord as our hostage and pull Him our way.

We decree that *our* way is *His* way!

There are ways we might want to take – often for reasons of pride – which the Lord would have us refrain from following to manifest something of the graciousness of His humility.

But we refuse to listen to His voice which bids us to choose the path that leads to peace.

We prefer to make noise. We clamour to be heard rather than put into practice the first word of the great commandment which is to *listen*.

The Great Commandment calls upon us to *listen* so that we may *love*.

Listen ... and you shall love.

The psalmist, for his part, invites us to *listen to the voice that speaks of peace*.

All too often we are too proud and stubborn of heart to listen.

This closes us off from hearing the voice of God which speaks peace.

Quite literally, it happens that our wounded pride and our failure to engage in honest dialogue often lead to senseless and destructive confrontation.

Year in, year out, we see this played out in Northern Ireland.

Those who look on from outside – especially when they hear certain spokespersons invoking Christ and religion in their discourse – are nothing less than scandalised by this.

The Book of Proverbs warns us that before us there can be *a road that seems right to walk, but it ends in death*.

This is surely not the path for Christians to pursue.

Unfortunately, some are so intent on *their way or no way* that they become entrenched in positions that lead nowhere.

Christians are called to be *People of the Way*.

We must take care not to be so obsessed with our *rights of way*, that we fail in regard to the task confided to us: to create *God's highway* in the world and to walk this path shoulder to shoulder.

As Jesus' disciples we are sent out to walk life's road proclaiming the gospel message of peace. Is it not significant that Jesus did not send His disciples out alone, but in pairs, to proclaim the Good News?

They were to walk together!

As Christians today we are called to bear witness to Christ's peace in accord with one another, offering mutual respect, rooted in Christ's own humility of heart.

In today's first reading from the prophet Zechariah we heard the coming of the Messiah-King described in these terms: *See now, your king comes to you; he is victorious, he is triumphant, humble and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

We heard the prophet go on to describe how with the Messiah-King no room is given to displays of pride: *He will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem.*

As Christians, we believe those words find fulfilment in Jesus' humble entry into Jerusalem.

This vision of the prophet Zechariah demanded of those with whom it was first shared a radical conversion of mind and heart. This was surely not the way many of the people saw progress being made in the land, but it was and it remains God's way.

The prophet's words still challenge us.

They show us that it is never God's way to impose anything on others.

Does this really surprise us?

After all, God's way is love and a hallmark of love is humility of heart.

This is the great revelation of Jesus Christ *who for our sake humbled Himself.*

St Paul writes eloquently of this attitude of humility embodied by Christ, telling us that we should make it ours: *Have in you the same mind, the same heart, the same sentiments as were in Christ Jesus who, emptying Himself of pride, accepted to humble Himself.*

Elsewhere the apostle exhorts: *Humble yourselves before each other.*

Sadly, we stand off from one another, or, we confront one another, because our wounded pride won't allow us *to give way to each other out of love*, as the apostle suggests.

Jesus says: *Shoulder my yoke and learn from me. I am gentle and humble of heart.*

Taking on a yoke unites us one to another so that we may work together.

United to the Lord, we are also called to be united with each other in the community of disciples.

Those who are united listen to each other and move in the same direction. When they do so, their work is made considerably lighter.

We can decide to submit our lives and our wills to Christ's direction. Then we would stop pulling against each other in this land.

When that becomes the case, how much more energy and strength we will have for the real task set before us: to till the land, to make its soil more fertile, good earth conducive to producing a rich harvest for all its inhabitants to share, for the greater glory of God.

Amen!