

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Zechariah 9:9-10](#)

[Responsorial Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14](#)

[Reading II: Romans 8:9, 11-13](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/070923.cfm>



The gospel passage today has two parts. In the first section, the style has a closer relationship to the Gospel of John than to the rest of Matthew. Through verse 27, Jesus gives praise to the Father who has chosen to reveal himself to humanity. Jesus states that the Father, Lord of heaven and earth – the supreme Lord who has power over everything – has handed all power and control over to Jesus. The style of authority that Jesus exercises is one of humility. He does not impose authority but invites, beckons, and engages with others. His primary role is to introduce others to the Father whom Jesus fully knows. When people know the Father, they will live lives that express the Father's will.

The learned and clever are caught up in themselves and think that they know the best way for things to be done. When people place their ultimate allegiance to themselves (Adam and Eve), to their power or military force (most of the monarchy of Israel and Judah), to their fame, or their possessions, they become idolaters. Only God should have our total commitment.

Jesus addresses God as Father. In the Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke. "Abba" would most likely have been the word Jesus used. Abba is a much more intimate word, like papa or daddy, and connects to the "little ones." The Greek word *nepioi*, which means "infants," might also be rendered figuratively as "little ones." What qualities do little ones possess that are essential for being part of the reign of God? "Children are vulnerable, open, trusting, reliant, weak, and must depend upon those with power to protect and care for them." (John Martens, America Magazine) They come to trust those with power as opposed to trying to do it all on their own. God continues to reach out to us every day, and our focus is on what we can do. Until one recognizes that there is a need, there is no need for God. The little ones, whether infants, children, the poor, the marginalized, those with developmental disabilities, or the oppressed, know that they need God.

The last portion of the Gospel passage includes Jesus' invitation for all of us to come to Him and allow Him to help us and give us rest. Once we recognize our need, Jesus is there to help us. He invites us to be linked with him – to take up his yoke.

A yoke can have a negative connotation of slavery or oppression. It can also have a positive connotation of partnership and bearing the burden together. Some references to marriage speak of the husband and wife being yoked – or working through the challenges of life together

The first reading is taken from the writings of Zechariah, who ministered as the people of Judah were returning from the Babylonian exile about 520 years before Jesus. He is also mentioned in the Book of Ezra. His chief focus was rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

The passage read today focuses on the hope of a peaceful king coming to Jerusalem. The prophet looks to God to be faithful to the promises that God made in times past. The reign of

this king will be extended all over the earth. For Christians, this passage is often connected to Palm Sunday when Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey and who, after his resurrection, will be the eternal Lord.

In the verses preceding the second reading, Paul states that the Law was powerless to save people. It is essential to understand the terms. The flesh is not the same as the body in Paul's writings. "Flesh" is human nature left to itself, separated from God, and at times in opposition to God. The body is the instrument through which we live and act. When the person, is under the domination of the unredeemed mindset and attitudes, the body expresses the "flesh" (humanity without God). In Christ, we have become new creations and live a new life (Romans 6 from last week). We now live in the Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, to live the values and virtues of God.

**Themes:**

Humility

Surrender to God

Human nature.

Virtue and Vice

**Reflection Questions:**

What are some ways that you avoid being dependent on others? What makes this difficult?

What does humility mean to you?

How have you experienced the benefit of being a partner in some aspect of your life?

Where do you see the "flesh" manifest in behaviors in society, amongst people that you know, or even in yourself?

Where do you experience life in the Spirit? In what ways do you see the Spirit's work in your life or the lives of others?

**Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that God will help us take up the yoke of Christ and follow him in speaking the truth lovingly, offering forgiveness to those who wrong us, and praying for our enemies

For the grace to be childlike: that we may learn dependence upon God and surrender our attempts to control our lives through knowledge, power, or possessions

For a fuller life in the Spirit: that God will free us from self-absorption and selfishness so that we may allow the Spirit to lead us into a more authentic and virtuous life

For the grace to surrender control: that we may let Jesus ease our burdens and journey side by side with us in every event in our lives

For freedom from fear: that God will help us surrender our fear and anxiety into the hands of the One who loves us and strengthen our confidence that God will provide for us in every circumstance