

14th Sunday (A)

6<sup>th</sup> July 2014

'The tender mercy of our God'

Zech 9: *your king ... humble and riding on a donkey*

Rom 8: *the Spirit of God has made His home in you*

Mt 11: 25–30: *Come to Me all you who labour and are overburdened ...*

These words from Our Lord Jesus are some of the most famous, and most comforting in the whole Gospel. They are words that I read aloud countless times in the many years when I was a hospital chaplain. They speak powerfully of the fact that our faith is not primarily something to be learnt — like a subject at school — but is a deep relationship to be experienced, the love of our tender God. *Come to Me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.* These are words of unimaginable tenderness, uttered by God who desires that we are close to Him, and are cared for by Him, even fed by Him, as in the Eucharist, so as to be at peace. Only in Him do we “find rest for our souls.” This peace and life are open to us all if we seek it in Christ — it’s not beyond any of us; it’s offered to all of us, every one of us, here in the Mass. Christ does not look for qualifications for His love. Young and old, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, ...

He only asks that we are faithful. Or, if we are unfaithful to Him and sin, that we turn again to Him — come back to Him — and receive once again His mercy, love, and blessing.

We have to remember that we cannot receive blessings from Christ in any better way than here in His own Church, amongst His own people, with the rites and Sacraments that He Himself has established. And just as we have found our home with Christ — and found the peace in life that comes from knowing the one true God — so we should also be eager to spread this word. We should, all of us, be seeking others to share this Christian life with. “Come to Me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.” This is something that countless others — indeed, all of humanity — could do with hearing. But they are not going to hear it unless we ourselves share it with them. Aren’t there others whom you think you could be inviting into faith, or back to the faith? So you have friends or family members who are in need of Baptism? Or who might well consider becoming

Catholics? Or who are adults who never received the beautiful Sacrament of Confirmation? Who is going to ask them, if not *you*? This is most certainly the time of year when you might be opening such a discussion. Next year's 'RCIA' will begin in September, and already some parishioners have asked to join this course and prepare for receiving the Sacraments next Easter. But there are undoubtedly others who are out there — others whom we each know — who are just waiting for the invitation. Jesus never stops inviting more and more people into His life, but we can sometimes stop sharing that invitation.

Take today's Gospel as an encouragement — as a challenge — to have that conversation soon. Let's *not* stop sharing Jesus's invitation to enter fully into His Church and have the gifts and graces, the "rest for our souls" that He offers. Surely, in fact, this is what every person desires? — to have a heart that is fulfilled and knows that life has a meaning and a purpose. Taking the 'yoke' of Christ is not burdensome or heavy; it demands something of us, yes: a faithfulness to the Mass, to our prayers, to our

charity; it demands a forgiving of others ("forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us") ... but it is not heavy or burdensome. In fact, taking on the 'yoke' of Christ allows us to be freed of all sorts of other guilts and burdens, sins and sadnesses.

At the back of Church, in the porch, is a set of little green leaflets, like this [...], which spell out in more detail what it means to enter the RCIA programme. I urge you, if you know an adult in need of Baptism/Confirmation, or wanting to convert from another Christian denomination and be able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist with us here at Mass, then take a sheet, share it with them, have the conversation. Please do this, for it is your part in the vital work of evangelization. The Gospel cannot be spread just by me, or by the bishops ... you must play your part as lay Catholics, bringing more souls to salvation in Christ. Hear again His words, and pray that the Lord will help you speak to someone you know with conviction, gentleness, and faith. *Come to Me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest.*