

## Homily: 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

Since we reopened the church for private prayer a couple of weeks ago, it's been lovely to see people praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament, exposed in the monstrance for our adoration. And on our monstrance, written in Latin around the window in which we see the Host, are some words from today's Gospel: "Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis": "Come to me, all you who labour". Every person who has come into the church to pray has been a visible sign of the faithful hearing the Lord's voice and responding to His call: coming to be with Him, away from the cares, the work, the struggles of daily life. Today it's an even greater joy to be able to welcome [some of] you back to Mass, the next stage in coming close to Jesus, approaching Him in the sacraments.

Today's short Gospel is very beautiful and filled with teaching about our relationship with God. But it starts with the relationship within God Himself. Jesus, the Son, cries out in joy: "I bless You, Father". Jesus is the Son of God – He loves the Father and He knows Himself to be loved. And Jesus blesses the Father because the most important things have been hidden from the learned and the clever – perhaps, we could say, hidden from those who are proud – and revealed to "mere children" – those who are humble, those who approach God knowing that He is our Father too. Humility is one of the defining characteristics of the children of God: we know that we are not self-sufficient – we need Him. And it's only by living with humility that we can be followers of Jesus, who teaches us today that He Himself is gentle and humble in heart.

But I've always felt a bit puzzled by something the Lord says in the Gospel today: "Shoulder my yoke and learn from me... and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy, and my burden light." I'm puzzled, because the yoke of Jesus, the burden of Jesus, is the Cross – and we all know that a sharing in the Lord's cross can feel anything but light. We want to be free of our sufferings, our worries about the future, our workload. We want to shake off every burden – not take on another one! Why does the Lord say that we will find rest in shouldering His yoke with Him?

Perhaps the answer lies precisely in the qualities Our Lord has already commended to us: being humble, being a child of God. The opposite, pride, is exhausting: it means constantly having to be self-sufficient, always keeping up appearances, never willing to let others see our flaws. But to be humble, to be a child of God: this is the yoke of Jesus and it is a place of rest. Humility allows us to recognise that we are not self-sufficient, we need God and others, and so it takes a bit of the pressure off us. Over these last few months we've all become more conscious of just how much we need one another, and how much we need God. Despite all the learned and clever people in the world, there are and always will be things beyond our control. In the end, we are always children.

But that's a good thing. In many ways a child has more freedom than an adult – perhaps not always freedom to go where he or she wants or to do everything he or she likes – but freedom to need. Every child has – or at least should have – complete freedom to ask, without any shame, for help, for food, for care, for love. As adults we lose this freedom.

Somehow we feel it's wrong to need. But Jesus teaches us to remain children. Of course, we still have responsibilities, work, worries – but to carry the yoke of Jesus with Him means to be humble enough to be children of God: to call God 'Father', and really mean it. It's true that being a disciple takes effort, it means taking up a cross, a yoke, which at times can seem like a burden: but to live as children of God – this is a very light burden indeed. "My yoke is easy and my burden light", Jesus tells us. Light for us, because in truth it is carried by Him – if only we let Him. "Come to me, and you will find rest for your souls." What a beautiful invitation. Today, at the altar – whether we are in the church or participating in Mass at home – let's bring all our needs to Jesus, unburdening ourselves, allowing ourselves to be humble, to be children, to be dependent on God.

Fr Andrew

