Homily – Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."

Many people have said these are among the most beautiful words Jesus ever spoke. They are words of comfort, hope, and love. Yet there is an irony in today's Gospel. Jesus speaks these words immediately after many people have rejected Him. Entire towns had witnessed His miracles and still refused to believe. He had every reason to turn away from them. But he never does. Why? Because Jesus cannot stop loving.

That is the heart of today's Gospel. The Messiah is not simply a teacher, a miracle worker, or a prophet. The Messiah is the Son of God whose very nature is love. He loves those who welcome Him, but He also loves those who ignore Him. He loves those who believe, and He loves those who doubt. He loves the sinners, the broken, the indifferent, and even those who will eventually condemn Him to death.

Jesus does not love people because they deserve His love. He loves because God is love.

Throughout the Gospels, we see this again and again. He forgives sinners. He touches lepers. He welcomes children. He eats with tax collectors. He seeks out the lost. Even when people reject Him, His heart remains open. That is why today's invitation is so extraordinary. ***"Come to me."***

He does not say, ***"Come to me after you have fixed your life."*** He does not say, ***"Come to me once you have become worthy."*** He simply says, ***"Come."*** Bring your burdens. Bring your sins. Bring your disappointments. Bring your fears. Bring your failures. Bring everything. ***"I will give you rest."***

Notice that Jesus does not promise an easy life. He never says there will be no crosses to carry. Instead, He promises that we will never carry them alone.

As St. Augustine wrote so beautifully, ***"Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."*** Every human heart searches for happiness, peace, acceptance, and love. Too often, we search for success, possessions, popularity, or power. Yet none of these can satisfy the deepest longing of the soul. Only Christ can.

The first reading today presents the Messiah as a humble king who rides into Jerusalem, not on a war horse, but on a donkey. Earthly kings display power through force. Jesus reveals His power through humility. His greatest victory is not won with an army but on the Cross. Think about His final moments.

As He hangs upon the Cross, rejected by His own people, mocked by the crowd, abandoned by many of His friends, He looks toward heaven and prays, ***"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."***

He does not excuse sin, but He responds to sin with mercy. That is who God is. Love that refuses to stop loving. Mercy that never tires of

forgiving. Grace that is always ready to begin again. And this is where today's Gospel becomes very personal.

Jesus is not simply inviting us to receive His love. He is inviting us to imitate it.

The world teaches us to ask, ***"What can I get?"*** Jesus teaches us to ask, ***"What can I give?"*** The world says that happiness comes from having more. Jesus says that joy comes from giving ourselves away.

We often spend so much energy trying to be appreciated, accepted, admired, or recognized. Yet the happiest people are rarely those who receive the most. They are usually the people who give the most. Parents know this. Faithful spouses know this. Good priests know this. The saints certainly knew this.

Love grows by being given away. The more we give ourselves in love, the more our own hearts are healed. This is why Jesus tells us to take His yoke upon us.

At first, that sounds strange. Who wants another burden? But His yoke is different. A yoke joins two together.

When we take Christ's yoke upon ourselves, we discover that He carries the greater weight. We are no longer walking alone. He walks beside us. That is why His burden is light—not because life is easy, but because love changes everything.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to receiving that love is pride. Sometimes we think we do not need God's mercy. Sometimes we convince ourselves

that we can manage on our own. Yet the holiest people are not those who think they have no sins. They are the ones who are never afraid to say, ***"Lord, I am sorry."***

Those simple words open our hearts to the mercy God has always wanted to give.

God is never reluctant to forgive. He is always waiting for us to receive the gift He longs to pour into our lives.

If you remember only one sentence from today's Gospel, let it be this: Be a giver, not a taker. Give forgiveness. Give encouragement. Give patience. Give kindness. Give your time. Give your prayers. Give yourself. For that is exactly what Jesus has done for us.

And when we live that way, something remarkable happens. Our burdens become lighter. Our hearts become free. Our fears lose their power. We begin to discover the peace that Jesus promised—the peace the world cannot give.

Then, one day, after all the burdens of this life have passed away, the One who has walked beside us every step of the journey will lead us into the eternal rest He promised when He first said: ***"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest."*** **Amen.**