

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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There are moments in life when we smile on the outside but carry hidden burdens within. Some are weighed down by grief, others by illness, family struggles, financial worries, loneliness, disappointment, or the silent battle against sin. At times, life itself feels heavy, joy seems distant, and our hearts grow tired. It is precisely into that reality that Jesus utters today's beautiful invitation: "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) Notice that Jesus does not first ask us to become perfect. He does not say: "Come only when you have solved all your problems." He simply says: "Come." His Heart is always open. He is the divine Host who welcomes every weary traveler. He invites everyone who longs for comfort, and everyone who feels exhausted by the burdens of life. His welcome is not cold or distant; it is warm, personal, and filled with mercy. He embraces not merely our bodies but our very souls.

When we place our burdens in His hands, they become lighter. When our lives seem dry and lifeless, His grace causes new leaves of hope to grow again. Like a tree revived by fresh rain after a long drought, our hearts begin to bloom once more because His love restores life.

The First Reading from Zechariah beautifully prepares us for this Gospel. The prophet announces the arrival of a King unlike the rulers of this world: "Behold, your king comes to you; humble and riding on a donkey." Likewise, Jesus does not conquer through force or power. He conquers through humility, gentleness, and sacrificial love. His kingdom is not built on fear but on peace. That is why He can truly say: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." The humility of Christ is not weakness; it is the strength of divine love.

The Second Reading from the Letter to the Romans reminds us that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Saint Paul tells us that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in us. Therefore, we are not called to carry our crosses alone. The Holy Spirit strengthens us,



encourages us, and gives us the grace to overcome the desires of the flesh, and to live as children of God. We are never abandoned in our struggles.

Dear friends, imagine a long-distance marathon. At the beginning, every runner is energetic and confident. As the kilometers pass, fatigue sets in: muscles ache; the body becomes dehydrated; and every step feels heavier and more difficult. Along the route, however, stand volunteers who eagerly hand out water, energy drinks, and encouragement to the runners. These small acts refresh the runners and give them the strength to continue.

Our Christian life is very much like a marathon. The road is long and sometimes it is exhausting. There are hills of suffering, valleys of discouragement, and unexpected obstacles along the way. Unlike an ordinary marathon, we are not merely helped by human volunteers, we are met by the greatest Volunteer of all; the One who freely offered Himself for the salvation of the whole world. Jesus, who sacrificed His life on the Cross now stands beside us with His Sacred Heart wide open. He offers us not merely water but living water. He gives not temporary energy but eternal strength. He refreshes us with His mercy, nourishes us with His Body and Blood, and fills our hearts with hope, peace, and joy. Whenever we approach Him in prayer, in the Eucharist, or in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, He renews our strength for the journey.

This invitation of Jesus reminds us of the beautiful spirituality of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower. She discovered that holiness does not depend on extraordinary achievements but on complete trust in God's loving mercy. She once said:

"It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love."

She also wrote:

"I will seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way—very short and very straight."

That *little way* is simply placing ourselves like little children in the loving arms of Jesus. A child does not carry heavy burdens alone; the child runs into their father's embrace. Jesus asks us to do the same.

The life of Saint Alphonsa offers another beautiful example. Her life was marked by physical pain, misunderstanding, and constant suffering. Yet she never allowed suffering to separate her from Christ. Instead, she transformed every pain into an offering of love. She once prayed: "Jesus, make me an instrument of Your peace and love, even through my suffering." Saint Alphonsa understood that when our cross is united with the Cross of Christ, suffering is no longer meaningless; it becomes a path to holiness and a source of grace for others.

Perhaps many of us are trying to carry burdens that Jesus never asked us to carry alone. We carry guilt that He is ready to forgive. We carry worries that we have never entrusted to Him. We carry resentment that He asks us to release. We carry anxiety about tomorrow while forgetting that He already holds tomorrow in His hands.

Today Jesus gently repeats His invitation:

"Come to Me."

Come with your failures.

Come with your fears.

Come with your sickness.

Come with your family struggles.

Come with your hidden tears.

Come just as you are.

His Heart is open. His arms are stretched out. His yoke is easy because He carries it with us. His burden is light because He Himself bears the greater weight.

As we approach the Altar today, let us not merely receive Jesus with our hands; let us place our entire lives into His Sacred Heart. There we will discover the rest that the world can never give, the peace that no suffering can destroy, and the joy that only Christ can offer.

May the humble King, foretold by Zechariah, reign in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us each day, as Saint Paul teaches. And may the childlike trust of Saint Thérèse and the joyful endurance of Saint Alphonsa inspire us always to answer Christ's loving invitation:

"Come to Me... and I will give you rest."