

## Deacon Mark Homily 7/9/23

Read: Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 145; Romans 8:9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30

Our readings today speak of prophecy and fulfillment. They also speak about you and me in that Almighty God gave all of us life, to not wonder aimlessly through our journey of life. The Old Testament people after Moses were yoked to the law and their own desires, they had yet to learn of obedience and mercy, love of neighbor and enemy; the Messiah had not yet come. But for you and me, the Messiah has come, and we are to yoke ourselves to our loving and merciful Savior, Jesus Christ. The Hebrew people of the Old Testament believed that the prophecy that we heard in our first reading from the Old Testament Book of Zechariah which was written 500 years before the birth of Jesus, was about how the Messiah would enter the Holy City of Jerusalem. He would not enter Jerusalem as a conquering warrior but in lowliness and peace. Jesus, the King of Heaven and Earth would not ride in a chariot or on horseback like the former kings of Judah did as a display of triumph and power; Jesus humbly entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Jesus had already displayed His power to the people of that land, but His power was the power of love and His triumph over sin and death was yet to come. His triumph is our triumph too! People of power, even to this day, do not understand meekness and humility. Every week here at Holy Mass, we pray for the leadership in our government and the governments around the world that they serve in humility and love. That they choose Christ as their hero and emulate Him. We also pray for ourselves and those we love to not fall into the trap of power, control, greed, and self-righteousness. Aren't we supposed to emulate the life of Jesus, isn't that why we are here? We all fall short on emulating His life, I certainly do, we cannot do it on our own. We need His help, we need His guidance, we need His love and His mercy. We need to yoke ourselves to Him. We read in Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 11:28-30) the words of Jesus, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." The Jewish law with its 613 laws was difficult to obey. So the people were always being reminded of what they did not follow or what law they had broken, the "law" was burdensome. 613 laws are a lot to follow, to know and to understand. The Pharisees were learned in the law but were so wrapped up into the letter of the law that they would not budge from it, compassion, love, and mercy, the true basis of the law was forgotten. Jesus challenged the Pharisees and He challenges us too. What burdens are

we carrying, what burdens are you carrying? Are you laboring in great difficulty? Allow yourself to be “yoked” to Jesus and He will carry your load and give you rest. When we think of a yoke we may think of the yokes that farmers used to yoke two oxen together. The oxen then worked as a team, sharing the common load, traveling in the same direction. Yoked together, they could accomplish a great deal more than two individual oxen working independently of each other. A couple of days ago I was listening to the “Drew Mariani Show” on Relevant Radio and he was talking about the present progress of the cause for canonization of Bishop Fulton Sheen. Those of you who are around my age or older probably remember Bishop Sheen who was quite a radio (1930 -1950) and later a television personality because of his shows, especially his “Life is Worth Living” program which aired every week during prime time. *(He was on TV for a total 12 years)* Today, that would be unheard of. In the 1950’s there were only three television stations, ABC, CBS, and NBC and to have a Catholic Bishop who was also a theologian, on TV every week explaining the faith and moral issues drew more than 10 million viewers every week. It was and still is, the most widely viewed religious series in the history of television. What a gift that man was. And do you know how he started his day; do you know how he started every day? With prayer, talking and listening to God. And he did that before the Blessed Sacrament. He started his day by making a holy hour. He yoked himself to Jesus every day. He once told the story where he had traveled to a city to preach to the people. So early in the morning, which was his custom, he went into the church to make his holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament and while he was in the church, the custodian came and unbeknown to him that the bishop was in church, and thinking that someone left the church door open, the custodian locked it, and unlike our church doors today, which can always be opened from the inside, those church doors could only be opened with a key. Bishop Sheen finished his holy hour and discovered he could not get out. He ended up having to climb out through a window. Those kinds of experiences never deterred the Bishop from making his holy hour at the start of his day. Nothing stopped him from starting his day being yoked to our Lord, and nothing should stop you or me from doing the same. Maybe you do not have an entire hour, but perhaps you have 10 or 15 minutes. Maybe you are up, and on your way to work, long before the church doors are unlocked; then pray at home or wherever you are, perhaps pray in your car on the way to work. Do you have a Crucifix, pray before the Crucifix and if you do not have one, purchase one. If you do not have a Bible, then purchase one, one that is a Catholic edition, and know that there is a difference between a Catholic Bible and a Protestant

Bible. The Catholic Bible was written and accepted in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Protestant Bible was written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and removed 7 books of the Old Testament and some verses from two others. The King James Version is not Catholic but Protestant. If you cannot purchase a bible but you have a smart phone or an iPad or a computer, then use it to read and pray the daily gospel; meditate on it and allow our Lord to speak to your heart. There are many Catholic apps available, perhaps go to the USCCB, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; they have a wealth of information along with the entire bible, daily readings, the Catechism, and so much more. Put that modern technology to work by using it to accomplish the most important thing of the day, yoking ourselves to Jesus Christ. Start your day off on the right foot, by building up your relationship with your Savior and yoking yourself to Him and making your eternal salvation a priority. Make Christ, your priority, your first order of business, not the television or the radio, not your emails or Facebook. It is time for us to do some re-arranging of our priorities and goals, so let's make God our first priority and our eternal salvation in heaven our number one goal. And we will find our burdens lessened and greater joy and fulfillment throughout our lives.