14th Ordinary Sunday
July 5, 2020
“Bearable with Jesus”

Zech 9:9-10
Rom 8:9...13
Mt 11:25-30

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The COVID-19 Shutdown certainly has changed things for Americans and for the world. No one’s life has not been affected. Some will suffer economically for a long time to come. And who really knows how many physical, emotional, and social problems the shutdown caused – and is still causing – in many places and in many lives.

However, I think that there has been a real blessing that has come from the crisis that the pandemic caused. It is that it forced millions of people to re-evaluate their own lives and the way they live. It helped many to truly appreciate what most, if not all of us, take for granted.

It helped us make value judgments about what things are important and about what things are not. It forced us to explore and discover other ways of doing things. And if we used some of the time to reflect honestly and to look within ourselves – it would have brought us to a new and better relationship with God and with our loved ones!

These have been truly hard and stressful times. And for many, the hard times and the stress will continue well into the future!

Fortunately, the scriptures for today bring much to bear upon our present situation and how to grow in spiritual stature in the days ahead.

Zechariah tells us, and a broken, exiled, and captive people, that the Lord God is still in charge. Nevertheless, God is not like the warrior kings who overpower and exploit everyone else. Our God is a king of peace. He is not interested in or dependent upon all the instruments of warfare, past and present. He will conquer evil and the enemy with His kindness, His patience, His non-violence.
We know now, that Jesus was the one who was sent to teach us the ways of God – and the way that we should live. In fact, Jesus was the Son of God who actually rode into Jerusalem – not on a warhorse, but on a donkey – a symbol of gentleness and non-violence! Jesus rode into Jerusalem to conquer the enemies of love. He would do this by his suffering and death on the cross. His suffering and death actually conquered death itself – because the Father raised him up as the champion of all that is true, beautiful, and good!

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus assures us that it is not university degrees, financial cleverness, or political astuteness that help us discover God or what is important in life. No, not at all! It is our simplicity and openness to God – in ourselves, in others, in the scriptures, and in the world around us that leads to true wisdom and to ultimate lasting peace.

But there is even more. Jesus tells us that if we trust in him – and throw in our lot with him – he can make life bearable for us. God has all the answers – Jesus is our guide through the mystery of suffering and the mystery of life. If we yoke ourselves to him, he will guide us through whatever hardships we experience now – and through those that the future will bring. Furthermore, he will be with us at every step of the journey!

Finally, St. Paul teaches us how important it is to live in the Spirit of Jesus – and not in the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world lives only in the here and now. It idolizes youth – It glorifies the human body – It worships lust, wealth, and power as its gods. Just look at many of the designer fashions – the face lifts and the body sculpting – the glamour magazines and the youthful makeovers – None of these prolong our life or prepare us for meeting God at the moment of death! Even our accomplishments mean nothing if they don’t serve others and bring them closer to God.

Brothers and Sisters, we are not “debtors to the ‘flesh’ ” – to the false values of the world. If we are – then this life is all that we have. However, if we live in – and by – the Spirit of God and put these lesser things to death, we will live forever – starting now and infinitely beyond any time we can measure.

So, let us pray that we always walk with Jesus who can help us to make our journey into the infinite presence and glory of God!

Amen.