

St Pius-St Anthony 14th Sunday Ordinary Time Year A

All this rain recently (but not today right on this big outside weekend) The rain has me thinking, that when we kids were little playing outside we loved a great big rain, because a nearby street to our home, had a deep dip in it (drainage grates on each side & the dip dropped the street at least two feet down and then incline back out). So when water really backed up (I am not saying anyone purposely stuffed leaves in the grates!) but the water backed up making like a community swimming pool. There was a city park right next to it that we always walked or biked through, so word spread fast about the 'splash or wading pool' that was created. Some smaller kids could even claim they swam in this thing. 'Don't we kids do the craziest things- (didn't we know that it at some point in the drain-line backed up this just made a huge, open sewage pool....but that is part of being a kid and learning through silly & unwise actions) But our water splash fun was only part of it. What I am leading up to, is that inevitably cars would start turning around and not go thru it. Until sometimes a truck might pull up & rev-up its engine and then floor it, to create huge waves and roostertail kind of sprays over us. Inevitably smaller vehicles would see that, (or they were in a hurry) and they would venture it too. Guess what? They 'flooded out.' Here is where it got good. Sometimes as we kids were right there anyway, we would help push the cars out and sometimes (Jackpot!) we might get a cash tip from the wearied drivers for pushing them out. Now, here is where my story really intersects with today's gospel. Some cars (imports we called them back then) were so small and very light and they were easy pushes, but those four door long-land barges (but they didn't float) made another level push. A couple of us might get to pushing, and we are not getting very far, especially on the up-incline coming out. Until the older kids put a hand on the trunk or bumper, and then suddenly, what relief, the more hands, the easier the push. That makes me think of Jesus saying 'Take my yoke, let me put my hand on this and you rest a moment'. Just like someone taking over a lift as you walk up the stairs with a load, Jesus says, 'Come to me (slip into my yoke) and I will bear your burdens!' Such a relief, thank you Jesus. Pushing those cars, the burn started in your thighs or calves, and then as someone bigger gets in to help, oh what a difference you felt. Instant refreshment!

This is what Jesus is saying to all of us: Are you weary, or you weighing down under a load? He says, "Come to me, all you who labor and are toiling and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). This is so close to what 1 Peter 5:6-7

says too. There, Peter tell us, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your worries upon Him because he cares for you." When those other hands put in on the task with you, what a load lightened it makes! What a heavy lift relieved! Don't we all need that at one time or another, or always?

For me, another example of such relief found working together, being yoked together to make a hard push or pull easier, is this other childhood memory. We boys went once with dad to help out or maybe just attend a Church fundraiser at our home parish church. It was either at a parish picnic or a Lourdes men's club social event but it was an official competition tug of war. There were many really serious Tug-Teams all decked out in matching uniforms, and the thickest rope I'd ever seen (like what you tie off a barge with). They had tilled up the little league ball diamond to make the dirt fine & loose and these team members would come in get their seat, burrow in their feet (dug in) against a bank they made & the guy in front of them sat on like a bunker... until the starting gun went off, and they tugged back and forth (heave-ho-hold). They would pull and could see some guys straining so much they (veins popping) and then I guess the anchor guy at the end of line would hold, while they regripped, a very short one but still a moment's rest and then pull again (sometimes the anchor guy was so dug in that the other team almost pulled him to stand up position while he held tight). Of course, eventually one team would pull the other and that little flag across the winning line and declare victory-then they all rested letting go the rope what a relief though, when all that tension was released. What a break getting that relief! Take some load off or (--all the load off). What a welcome rest Jesus alone provides us, too! We try to carry it all by ourselves, and we may push to the end, but always it will inevitably bear down on us so badly we collapse under the weight. But Jesus can lighten it, if only we let go and bind ourselves to Him. We do what we can and then yoke ourselves, turn ourselves over to Him, and He will carry our load. He walks along with us, supporting us and relieving the burden. I think this passage of Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all you burdened, and I will give you rest" ranks right up there with the dramatic scene of the apostles nearly out of their minds with anxiety/worry over the storm they have found themselves in on the sea in Mark 4:37-39. And Jesus calms it with His word of gentle command "Quiet, Be still". And the sea waves and violent wind cease! He tells us, "Come to me, I give rest!" Jesus gives the light comfort & relief from burden we seek!