

GOSPEL

MATTHEW 11:25-30

Jesus exclaimed, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

In today's Gospel, Jesus says: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". The Lord does not reserve this phrase for certain friends of his, no; he addresses it to "all" those who are weary and overwhelmed by life. And who could feel excluded from this invitation? The Lord knows how arduous life can be. He knows that many things weary the heart: disappointments and wounds of the past, burdens to carry and wrongs to bear in the present, uncertainties and worries about the future.

In the face of all this, Jesus' first word is an invitation, a call to move and respond: "Come". The mistake, when things go wrong, is to stay where we are, lying there. It seems obvious, but how difficult it is to respond and open ourselves! It is not easy. In dark times it feels natural to keep to ourselves, to ruminate over how unfair life is, over how ungrateful others are, how mean the world is, and so on. We all know it. We have had this awful experience a few times. But in this way, locked up inside ourselves, we see everything as grim. Then we even grow accustomed to sadness, which becomes like home: that sadness overcomes us; this sadness is a terrible thing. Jesus, however, wants to pull us out of this

"quicksand" and thus says to each one: "Come! — Who? — You, you, you". The way out is in connecting, in extending a hand and lifting our gaze to those who truly love us.

In fact it is not enough to come out of ourselves; it is important to know where to go. Because many aims are illusory: they promise comfort and distract just a little; they guarantee peace and offer amusement, then leave us with the loneliness there was before; they are "fireworks".

Therefore Jesus indicates where to go: "Come to me". And many times, in the face of a burden of life or a situation that saddens us, we try to talk about it with someone who listens to us, with a friend, with an expert.... This is a great thing to do, but let us not forget Jesus. Let us not forget to open ourselves to him and to recount our life to him, to entrust people and situations to him. Perhaps there are "areas" of our life that we have never opened up to him and which have remained dark, because they have never seen the Lord's light. Each of us has our own story. And if someone has this dark area, seek out Jesus; go to a missionary of mercy; go to a priest; go.... But go to Jesus, and tell Jesus about this. Today he says to each one: "Take courage; do not give in to life's burdens; do not close yourself off in the face of fears and sins. Come to me!".

He awaits us; he always awaits us. Not to magically resolve problems, but to strengthen us amid our problems. Jesus does not lift the burdens from our life, but the anguish from our heart; he does not take away our cross, but carries it with us. And with him every burden becomes light, because he is the comfort we seek.

When Jesus enters life, peace arrives, the kind that remains even in trials, in suffering. Let us go to Jesus; let us give him our time; let us encounter him each day in prayer, in a trusting and personal dialogue; let us become familiar with his Word; let us fearlessly rediscover his forgiveness; let us eat of his Bread of Life: we will feel loved; we will feel comforted by him.

It is he himself who asks it of us, almost insists on it. He repeats it again at the end of today's Gospel: "learn from me, and you will find rest for your life". And thus, let us learn to go to Jesus and, in the summer months, as we seek a little rest from what wearies the body, let us not forget to find true comfort in the Lord. May the Virgin Mary our Mother, who always takes care of us when we are weary and overwhelmed, help us and accompany us to Jesus.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you think are child like qualities that allow us to come to 'know' God.
- 'Come all' is the invitation of Jesus in this Gospel – all who labour and are overburdened – do you regularly hand over your burdens to Jesus, as you would to the closest of friends?
- Have you experienced Jesus lightening your burdens? Can you explain what that was like?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.