

July 05, 2020
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Zechariah 9:9-10
Psalms 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14
Romans 8:9, 11-13
Matthew 11:25-30

UNLOAD OUR BURDENS TO HIM!

Last June 22nd, our Mayor Derek Kawakami reported on the stress level of people here on our island due to this Covid-19 pandemic. He said that **60%** of Kauai households are experiencing **low stress** level; **34%** are on the **medium** level of stress; and **5%** are on the high level category. In any case, this pandemic has brought us, not only physical illness, but also psychological stress and, even spiritual scars. The report did not mention though how the people are coping with this stress. And so I am wondering, **do people turn to their faith and ask God for help? Or do they continue to rely on their human power?** Using the words of St. Paul in our 2nd reading, **do the people still living 'according to the flesh or according to the spirit?'**

A lot of psychologists and psychiatrists pointed out that during this difficult/stressful time in our history faith in God plays a very important role in overcoming the challenges of this pandemic. Faith in God helps in keeping good mental health. Faith in God helps the people see the light at the end of the tunnel. Faith in God brings hope, trust and optimism that everything will be all right at the end of the day. Faith in God offers peace knowing that God is still in control of everything.

There was a story about **Pope John XXIII**, who is now a saint, that during the days of the **Second Vatican Council**, he has this mantra of submitting all his anxieties/stress to God as part of his night prayer. He would say, **"Lord Jesus, I am going to bed. I have done my best today. It's your Church. Take care of it!"** It was a simple prayer that demonstrated well a very good understanding of the advice of Jesus in today's gospel when he said, **"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."**

In our prayer and in the celebration of the Holy Mass, **do we unload our burdens on the Lord Jesus and allow him to cool down the 'overheated radiators of our hectic/stressful lives?'** **Do we come to our Lord Jesus to rest in his arms like St. John XXII?**

Our coming to Church on Sundays celebrating the Holy Eucharist (*for some, it's everyday*) should be our time needed to unload the labors and burdens we have. We come to our Lord Jesus with humility and we trustingly place our stress-filled lives on his altar. We ask him to give us 'rest' and grace we need so we can have 'new energy' to face the challenges of life.

To heed the advice of our Lord Jesus to come to him demands that our hearts and minds must be open and willing to accept his teachings/ways. I would like to remind you though that when

we come to him our burdens will not automatically disappear. When we go out of this Church later on, our burdens, problems and difficulties facing this pandemic will still be there. However, if we have embraced the 'yoke of our Lord Jesus' we will face our burdens with a distinct and unique mind-set. Our response will be different. We will carry our loads with love. We will be at peace for we know that we are not alone because our Lord Jesus carries it with us.

There was a story of a man who once met a boy carrying a smaller crippled child on his back. **"Boy, that is a heavy load you are carrying!"** exclaimed the man. **"He is not heavy; he is my brother!"** responded the boy. The point of the boy is clear - **there is no burden too heavy when it is done in love and carried in love.**

The invitation of our Lord Jesus to come to him happens in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist all the time. He knows what is going through in us. He understands our struggles facing this pandemic. Thus, he calls us to come closer to him and put everything in his hands. **What happens when we do that?** We will not only be refreshed and find God's peace. But also, like the boy in the story, we will carry our necessary burdens in love. We will look at the difficulties we are facing in a Christ-like manner. We will take our burdens as an opportunity to bring out the best, and not the worst, in us.

This pandemic forced us to 'social distance' with each other. But, please let us not social distance ourselves to our Lord Jesus. Let us come closer to him relentlessly.

Last March 27th, reflecting on the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis said that 'this is not God's judgment on humanity, but God's call on people to judge what is most important to them and resolve to act accordingly from now on.' He said, addressing God, that **"it is not the time of your judgment, but of our judgment: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others."** These words of Pope Francis tell us concretely what happens when we come to our Lord Jesus and place ourselves in his hands without ceasing. Clearly, the result is that we will have a better perspective of what is happening. We will see a message in the 'mess.'

In this Mass, our Lord Jesus is endlessly inviting us to come to him. Let us continue responding positively to his call. Coming to him means we are trying to live our lives according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. Hence, let us humbly unload our burdens to him and ask him to refresh us. Let us take 'his yoke' so we can do everything in love. With him, we can be sure that no burden will be too heavy to carry!

Lord Jesus, we come to you today with all the burdens we are carrying. Please free us from unnecessary burdens that drain us and take out life in us. Instead, refresh us; renew us; and help us to have your perspective in all the events happening around us and in us. Amen.