

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #100

READING I Zechariah 9:9–10

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah

Thus says the **LORD**:
 Rejoice **heartily**, O **daughter Zion**,
 shout for **joy**, O **daughter Jerusalem!**
See, your **king** shall **come** to you;
 a **just savior** is **he**,
meek, and **riding** on an **ass**,
 on a **colt**, the foal of an **ass**.
 He shall **banish** the **chariot** from **Ephraim**,
 and the **horse** from **Jerusalem**;
 the **warrior's bow** shall be **banished**,
 and he shall proclaim **peace** to the **nations**.
 His **dominion** shall be from **sea to sea**,
 and from the **River** to the **ends** of the **earth**.

Zechariah = zek-uh-Rĭ-uh

Zion = Zĭ-uhn or Zĭ-ahn

A rich and exhortatory reading, in which the words of the Lord ring out joyfully and forcefully. Let your tone be guided by the joy and force that come through this reading, as much like a poem as it is Scripture.

Ephraim = EE-fray-im; EF-r*m

READING I Today's readings invite us to consider God's benevolence as we face the challenges of our daily lives. We can reimagine what our life is like when God's promise of salvation is fulfilled and we accept its grace into our lives.

The Book of Zechariah is a collection of two or perhaps three smaller prophetic units written by different authors but having somewhat similar themes. Although parts of this book are more universal in tone, it was probably compiled after the return from the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century bc. This period of rebuilding the

Jerusalem Temple and reestablishing a working society in Judea was a perilous time, so messages of consolation would have been most welcome.

This first reading is the second oracle in the second section (chapters 9 through 11) of the Book of Zechariah. Its interpretation depends on the meaning of the first oracle. Briefly, the first oracle describes how God, the great warrior, will protect Judea by setting up his home in the Jerusalem Temple and establishing his garrison there, not because Judea has earned

God's protection, but because God has seen their affliction.

Subsequently, in this second oracle, which is today's first reading, God urges Jerusalem to rejoice, because God is sending a king who is just—in right relationship to God—and humble. This one who is to come will be a king of peace, riding on a donkey, an animal used for farming and commerce, and vanquishing the implements of war (bows and arrows, chariots and horses). The Hebrew word translated "meek" to describe the king also has the connotation of "poor," "weak," or "lowly." Thus, we can

For meditation and context:

In this portion of his letter to the Romans, Paul instructs his audience about the nature of life in the Spirit. His watchwords are "death" and "life," the "body" and "flesh," and "spirit." Less does he contrast these terms than he works them into his argument like ingredients into dough, in which the Spirit is the leavening agent. Read slowly and carefully, to allow the terms of Paul's argument to sink into your assembly.

surmise that this king will come from among his own people. But when God establishes him in power, he will have dominion over all the peoples of the world. As you can imagine, the early Church associated this prophecy with Jesus and his entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey (see Matthew 21:1–11).

READING II Today's second reading is a continuation of our recent Sunday readings from Paul's Letter to the Romans. It is part of a longer section that began in chapter 5, in which Paul expounds

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 145:1–2, 8–9, 10–11, 13–14 (1)

R. I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God.

or

R. Alleluia.

I will extol you, O my God and King,
and I will bless your name for ever
and ever.

Every day will I bless you,
and I will praise your name for ever
and ever.

The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

The LORD is good to all
and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD,
and let your faithful ones bless you.

Let them discourse of the glory of
your kingdom
and speak of your might.

The LORD is faithful in all his words
and holy in all his works.

The LORD lifts up all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.

READING II Romans 8:9, 11–13

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans**Brothers and sisters:****You are not in the flesh;**

**on the contrary, you are in the spirit,
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.**

**Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong
to him.**

**If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead
dwells in you,**

**the one who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also,
through his Spirit that dwells in you.**

Consequently, brothers and sisters,

**we are not debtors to the flesh,
to live according to the flesh.**

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,

**but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,
you will live.**

on the nature of Christian life for those who have been justified by faith. Justification can be a difficult concept to understand, but, briefly, Paul asserts that fallen humanity has been set right with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This justification is available to all who open themselves in faith to receive this free gift. Further, he argues that the lives of the justified are transformed insofar as they are now free from sin and death (Romans 5), free from their old selves (Romans 6) and free from the belief that Jewish law will put them right with God (Romans 7). Finally, as

we see in this reading, Paul asserts that the Christian life is lived in the Spirit. We leave behind our old way of life—what Paul calls living "according to the flesh"—and now live in the Spirit of God who dwells in us. And because the Spirit of God dwells in us, we can be assured that we will be raised from the dead, just as Jesus was raised from the dead. This is not our doing, but it is God's free gift.

GOSPEL This reading from Matthew's Gospel is an example of the wisdom teachings of Jesus. Something sim-

GOSPEL Matthew 11:25–30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**At that time Jesus exclaimed:**

"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to little ones.

Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will.

All things have been handed over to me by my Father.

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

"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."

Though all the words in this opening line are evenly emphasized, there is a slight pause between "time" and "Jesus."

The first half of this reading has Jesus directly addressing God the Father. It has a quality of public intimacy.

The second half of this reading begins with these familiar and comforting words of Jesus. Imagine they are being said for the first time as you proclaim them.

Beautiful and reassuring.

ilar can be found in Sirach 51:23–30. In keeping with Matthew's Jewish-Christian audience, Jesus begins with a traditional Jewish blessing formula—"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth"—but with the addition of the divine attribute, "Father," which appears five times in this short text. He is offering praise and thanks for God's revelation, which will be channeled through Jesus according to God's "gracious will." The Greek *eudokia* here expands our understanding of God's attitude; it includes the notion that these actions are taken with "good will, kindly

intent, or benevolence." Moreover, it is not something that can be attained through superior intellect. Rather, it is revealed to "little ones," metaphorically speaking, the simple and uneducated. And what is this revelation? It is knowledge or experience of God's very self, to which Jesus has unique access as Son of the Father. In other words, we come to know God through the person of Jesus.

Thus, Jesus, like personified Wisdom in Sirach, invites all of us who are exhausted and weighed down to come to him and to take rest in him and be refreshed. The ref-

erence to taking on Jesus' yoke is probably in juxtaposition to the obligations of Torah law, since first- and second-century rabbis used the term in the phrases "yoke of the Torah" and "yoke of the kingdom of heaven" with a similar meaning. The words translated here as "meek" and "humble of heart" have similar meanings and can be translated, respectively, as "gentle or humble" and "lowly or deferring oneself as a servant to others." Let us ask ourselves, then, what does it mean to say that Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden light? C.C.