

Fourteenth Sunday Per Annum (A)
July 6, 2014.

Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Mt. 11:30).

With these words our Lord is inviting us to conform ourselves to His Sacred Heart and in so doing, this simple invitation tells us everything we need to know about God and about ourselves. Our Lord reveals Himself as a Teacher whom we can imitate; and by consequence, we are disciples who can indeed learn from Him. This divine initiative, since it comes from God, affirms our human nature for at the natural level, it is necessary for us to learn skills to survive and prosper. This is a self-evident truth. At the supernatural level, that is to say, in relation to the soul or what we commonly term the spiritual life, the very same is true. We learn to pray, to practice the virtues; we grow in the spiritual life just as we endeavour to grow and mature intellectually and morally. Having just celebrated the end of the academic year and perhaps attended the graduation of a relative or friend, it is always so uplifting to celebrate these achievements. If we have known these graduates as children, there is a particular joy in seeing how they have grown and become so accomplished. It certainly engenders hope and in some cases, real surprise. Those whom we knew as sworn enemies of school when they first went to school are now preparing to enter university or college.

To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often. These are the wise words of Blessed John Henry Newman, whose own spiritual journey to the fullness of the truth and to the Heart of Jesus was like our own spiritual journey, a passage from shadows and images to the truth. Where do we learn these saving truths? Principally at the celebration of the sacred liturgy which is both the school and feast of faith. We understand this word *liturgy* in a very specific manner. *In the New Testament the word 'liturgy' refers not only to the celebration of divine worship but also the proclamation of the Gospel and to active charity. In all of these situations it is a question of the service of God and neighbour. In a liturgical celebration the Church is servant in the image of her Lord, the one 'leitourgos'; she shares in Christ's priesthood (worship), which is both prophetic (proclamation) and kingly (service of charity) (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1070).* Year in and year out we celebrate the Mystery of Christ; Sunday after Sunday and on the great Feasts of the Church we submit to the Mystery of God not in bondage but in a transformative communion that brings about our growth in holiness or Christian perfection. Our Lord assures us: *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (Jn.15:15).* It is here, in the encounter with the Living God that He reveals everything to us: the truth about Himself, the truth about the human person and our purpose. Our Lord also said, *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him (Jn.4:23).* This is the eternal present in which we participate whenever we gather to worship in spirit in truth.

I am grateful to Divine Providence for having led me to this beautiful parish in such a beautiful part of our country. My role as your parish priest will be principally though not exclusively *liturgical*. For all of us, the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass Sundays, on the great Feasts of our Faith

and daily even, this is the source and summit of our Christian life. The unity of faith and life or what may be termed integrity or integration of life is our goal, no matter how old or young. We reverence the elders among us for their example of perseverance and we encourage the young people in our midst to strive for the higher things. *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him (Jn.4:23)*. True theology, that is to say, a correct understanding of the nature of God, is both the cause and the sign of human sanity. If we contradict divine revelation and the Church's tradition we end up in sheer insanity. And risk losing our eternal salvation. Almost forty years ago, Pope, St. John Paul II, then Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow in Poland, spoke these words at the Eucharistic Congress held in Philadelphia (1976): *We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think that the wide circle of the American Society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God's Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously....* For this reason, none of us can ever say that we can learn no more. The way of Christian discipleship which we have undertaken to follow individually and collectively with the support of the Christian community is a journey to the Heart of God.

Our Lord issues His invitation in the Gospel today: *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* In a treatise on Christian perfection St Gregory of Nyssa observes: *Our life is stamped with the beauty of His thought....The mind of Christ is the controlling influence that inspires us to moderation and goodness in our behaviour. As I see it, Christian perfection consists in this: sharing in the titles which express the meaning of Christ's name, we bring out this meaning in our minds, our prayers and our way of life (The Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. III, p. 396)*. We share in the titles which express the meaning of Christ's name by receiving the gift of salvation which the Father lavishes on us in Christ. Anointed for service, and sharing in His mission as Priest, Prophet and King, we actively cooperate in the work of salvation, our own and that of the whole world. What a privilege it is for us to be one with Christ our Lord in His saving work. What a grace it is for us to enjoy the loving protection of the Mother of God; our Lady who is for us both a model for discipleship and our teacher of the spiritual life. St. Maximilian Kolbe, the priest and martyr so profoundly devoted to the Immaculate Virgin and the Mystery of her Immaculate Conception summarizes for us what I hope will guide our every effort in our parish: *To lead every individual with Mary to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

May our devout and reverent reception of the Holy Eucharist draw us ever more intimately into our Lord's Most Sacred Heart; that we may learn from Him who is *gentle and humble in heart*, and *day by day bring our conduct closer to the life of heaven* (Prayer over the Offerings, 14th Sunday Per Annum, *The Roman Missal*).

