

FOURTEENTH ORDINARY SUNDAY (YEAR A)

HOMILY BY FATHER MARAIAH

During the U. S. Independence Day celebrations yesterday, Americans probably heard all or part of Emma Lazarus' poem inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty: *"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.... Send these, the homeless tempest-tossed to me."* Today's readings, especially the Gospel, gives the same message in a more powerful way: *"Take my yoke . . . and you will find rest."*

In the first reading, the prophet Zechariah consoles the Jews living in Palestine under Greek rule, promising them a "meek" Messianic King of peace riding on a donkey, who will give them rest and liberty. The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 145) praises and thanks a kind and compassionate God Who *"raises up those who are bowed down"* under heavy yokes. **In the second reading**, Paul tells the Christian community in Rome about two yokes, namely, the "flesh" and the "Spirit," and he challenges them to reject the heavy and fatal yoke of the flesh and accept the light yoke of the Spirit of Jesus. Christian spirituality, according to Paul, proceeds from the initiative of the Holy Spirit and means living in the realm of the "Spirit" as opposed to the "flesh." **In the Gospel**, Jesus offers rest to those *"who labor and are burdened"* if they will accept his *"easy yoke and light burden."* By declaring that his *"yoke is light,"* Jesus means that whatever God sends us is made to fit our needs and our abilities exactly. The second part of Jesus' claim is: *"My burden is light."* Jesus does not mean that the burden is easy to carry, but that it is laid on us in love, that it is meant to be carried in love, and that love makes even the heaviest burden light.

1) We need to unload our burdens on the Lord. This "unloading" is the main purpose of our personal and family prayers and is one of the functions of Divine Worship in the Church. During our daily prayers in the evening, we ask God's forgiveness for the sins and failures of day and receive the consoling assurance that we are reconciled with God and our fellow human beings. During the Holy Mass in our parish Church, we place our stress-filled lives on the altar and allow

FOURTEENTH ORDINARY SUNDAY (YEAR A)

HOMILY BY FATHER MARAIAH

Jesus to cool down the overheated radiators of our hectic lives. We also unload the burdens of our sins and worries on the altar and offer them and ourselves to God during the Holy Mass.

2) We need to be freed from unnecessary burdens: Jesus lays the light burden of his commandment of love on us and yokes us with himself, giving us his strength through the Holy Spirit to fulfill that commandment. Jesus is also interested in lifting off our backs the burdens that suck the life out of us, so that he can place around our necks his own yoke that brings to us and to others through us, new life, new energy, and new joy. We are called, not only to find peace, refreshment and rest for ourselves, but also to live the kind of life through which others, too, may find God's peace, God's refreshing grace, and the joy of placing their lives in God's hands.