

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Dec 9th 2015

The first two verses of today's reading from Isaiah, down to "not one of them is missing," might need a little explanation. This is part of a longer call to consider the mighty works of the Lord, and in some translations it is not clear that Isaiah is speaking about the stars, but even then "stars" meant something other for his hearers than it does for us. For them the stars seemed to either be governed by angelic beings or to actually be such beings, and Isaiah refers to them as if they were the army of God. These are the "hosts" we refer to in the "Holy, holy, holy" of the mass, using this older English word for massed armies of soldiers.

The next verse, "Why, O Jacob, do you say, and declare, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord?'," asks why God ignores Israel's plight. In his response Isaiah proclaims that this Lord of such power is more than willing to share that power with "those who hope in the Lord." The implication is that Israel has to hope in God and to ask for God's help, and this is a natural lead-in to today's Gospel reading.

In Isaiah we see God as all-mighty and almost a little distant in His great works, but then Isaiah turns to reassure Israel that this strength and power is at their disposal. Jesus, in Mark, is immeasurably closer than that to those who seek and accept Him; this very human God is far more tender and gentle with His own and those who seek to become so.

Yes, Jesus calls us to take his yoke upon our shoulders, which is a sign of submission and an acceptance of abject vulnerability, but it is, in our case, only a surrender to God, a readiness to belong to Him and to learn, a childlike dependence and willingness to let God love us into life by His forming us in His ways.

Where do I need to make that surrender, to change my ways into His? Where do I need to learn to depend on God at every moment and in every way?

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