

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jul 18th 2024

The Yoke of Jesus

A yoke is a heavy wooden piece placed on the shoulders of an ox to assist the animal in pulling the weight of the cart and to prevent it from wandering. In Rabbinic tradition, the Law of Moses was seen as a yoke that kept Israel from straying from Yahweh. However, over the centuries, the Mosaic Law became an intolerable weight, a tool for the priests, scribes, and Pharisees to control the common people. Matthew, through Jesus' words, is addressing his fellow Jews who feel oppressed by the heavy burden of the Mosaic Law.

William Barclay suggests that double yokes were quite common when two animals pulled a vehicle together. "Jesus is offering to share his yoke with us. He and I are in this together, and he offers to share my burden with me!" Jesus is not promising to carry our crosses to eliminate our troubles, pain, or disappointments. Instead, he is offering to journey alongside us.

Jesus promises rest to those who work hard and are burdened. In Chapter 16, we would also read, "If anyone wants to follow me, let him take up his cross and follow me" (Mt.16:24). It is important to understand Jesus' Cross as a symbol of his love for humanity. His acceptance of the Cross was not a punishment but the ultimate expression of his love.

Pope Francis says in his reflection on the passage that "Jesus does not magically resolve our problems, but he strengthens us amid our struggles. Jesus does not lift the burdens from our life, but he resolves our anguish from our hearts; he does not take away our cross but carries it with us. And with him, every burden becomes light (cf. v. 30), because he is the comfort we seek."

Biblie Claret