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Matthew 11:28-30

Diane McCormack, IHM

Come to me and I will give you rest – all of you who work so hard beneath a heavy yoke. Wear my yoke – for it fits perfectly – and let me teach you; for I am gentle and humble, and you shall find rest for your souls; for I give you only light burdens.

This brief passage reminds us that at times we all do get weary, wear down, feel fatigued, drained, burned out. We feel physically or mentally strained or exhausted by hard work.

Surprisingly, these moments of feeling fragile or lacking can be golden opportunities to learn, yet again, that it is when we are weak, when we come to know and believe that we need God, we are strong. If we come to God in some show of strength, we wouldn't feel the need of God. So, when all is said and done, these few lines are about weakness.

We don't like weakness. We consider it a flaw or a defect. We value strength – the ability to do for ourselves as well as for others. We're taught to be strong and courageous, to bear one another's burdens. That's well and good; but when it is OUR burden that needs to be carried, when we need things done FOR us, we hide our need. Why is it so difficult to say those simple three words "I need help?" It took me many years to ask for help because I thought if I did it would be right – maybe even perfect! It wasn't until I fell flat on my face that I learned how to ask God to give me strength in my weakness.

At times like these, we can really learn what grace is: God's benevolence, favor and kindness to us. Gerald May, in his book *Addiction and Grace*, says "Every person on this earth yearns to love, to be loved, to know love. Love is the why of life; why we are functioning at all. I am convinced it is the fundamental energy of the human spirit; the fuel on which we run, the wellspring of our vitality and grace is the flowing, creative activity of love itself; it's what make all goodness possible. Love should come first; it should be the beginning and the reason for everything."

The words of today's Gospel – "Come to me" – have two promises. The first promise is rest – not in the sense of cessation of work; rather the kind of rest that is refreshing and calming to the whole person; the kind that quietly lifts us up and allows us NOT to rely on our own strength for a while. The second thing Jesus promises, although a bit puzzling – is that we're to take his yoke upon us.

I want to pause for a moment to share with you what I found out about yokes. A yoke is a farming implement that joins two oxen together so they can share the workload evenly and become more productive. Sometimes an older, more experienced ox is joined by a younger less experienced animal so the older one can train the younger one while they work together.

Jesus uses the illustration of a yoke asking us to share and be partners with him in his work and in his ministry. He's also telling us he'll teach and guide us to be effective in life and service IF we do things in partnership and COMMUNION with him. Jesus tells us, "My yoke is

easy,” and if we share our burdens and depend upon His strength then our yoke won’t become burdensome or tiresome. Parenthetically the Gospel suggests that Jesus was a carpenter by trade and He most likely had experiences in hand-carving yokes.

SOME PONDERINGS

- + What in your life wearies you, weighs you down or exhausts you?
- + From what do you need rest?
- + How do you handle weariness?
- + Do you ask for the grace and rest that you need?
- + Do you truly trust Jesus? Remember he already knows what you’re thinking and feeling ... just sit and be with him.

NOTE: Monica Brown: “Come to me all you who are burdened and weary and I shall give you rest. Come to me as you are and I shall TEND TO YOU.”
ISAIAH 40: 25-31

A portion of this reading Isaiah says “God gives power to the tired and worn out, and strength to the weak. Even the youths shall be exhausted, and the young men will all give up. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

ABOUT EAGLES: For generations in the Native American culture, eagles are the strongest and bravest of all birds. Eagles know how to climb high into the air without working too hard. Some eagles can even fly away with prey that weighs more than they do and they can fly as high as 10,000 feet. They associate eagle with vision, wisdom and strength. The predatory spirit of this bird symbolizes Mother Earth. Predators help keep the balance of nature healthy. They capture the weak and the sick, which helps prevent the spread of disease. Throughout time, cultures have considered this a healing role of the eagle. Those working with “eagle spirit” are often healers. Eagle feathers are given to another in honor i.e., to Native warriors who won a battle or were particularly brave in war. Because the eagle is considered the strongest and bravest of all birds, its feathers symbolize what is strongest, bravest.

*** END WITH LYRICS ON EAGLES WINGS