

Take My Yoke Upon You and Learn From Me

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The scriptures today are simple, beautiful and refreshing just to read. Both of the readings have to do with being weary. That's something all of us can relate to. Sometimes life can seem like a treadmill that you just can't get off of, with all the recurring daily demands, responsibilities and obligations we must contend with everyday. Do you ever wish you could just stop the whirlwind of activity for a while, or step away from it? That's what vacations and holidays are for, but even then, you know it will end soon.

Sometimes people can back themselves into a corner of never ending stress and problems and chronic fatigue, trying to keep up with a job. Sometimes it is absolutely necessary to take care of yourself and feed your family, but sometimes it is also because of the materialist lifestyle that many people in modern society seek. In this situation there is something that can be done about it.

Jesus said in today's gospel, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and *learn from me*, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

In the quote from the gospel today, did you notice the words "*learn from me*"? That's a key right there to a way out, or a way to better handle the unrelenting stress and fatigue. People can feel trapped in a job, but Jesus does offer a way out, or a way to handle it better. We can learn from his life. For one thing, Jesus needed very little material things. His needs were simple.

Jesus didn't even have a home. We need a home for shelter and to take care of our families, but that's it. It doesn't have to be a mansion, or decorated with the latest style furnishings. People often get trapped into a high house payment that causes them to work too many hours trying to pay for it. A small modest home actually offers more freedom, because you don't have to work as hard to pay for it. A lower stress lifestyle is also worth a lot. With some thought and patience, there is probably a solution to living simpler than we do.

Christ was rich in his relationship with God and with the people in his life. This is where his treasure is, and where ours should be as well. It is hard to let go of the focus on material goods and allow yourself to be seen as not as successful as others, but it is worth it if you put the focus on your faith and the people in your life. When you are dying, no one will care what kind of home, furnishings, car or bank account you had. Your wealth will be found in your faith and those gathered around your bedside.

If a change in your job or a simpler standard of living really isn't possible, then the second part of this equation will be even more significant. Jesus frequently took time out from whatever he was involved in at the moment, to go off alone and pray. This is extremely important. The busier and more stressful our lives are, the more we need time out, and time away, for prayer. Brief moments on your lunch break. A half hour sitting in an empty church. A weekly hour of adoration. A week day mass. Maybe a one day personal retreat. Even a day at a park, beach, retreat house, hermitage or other solitary place is rejuvenating and you should not feel guilty about it, because Christ himself didn't. In fact he told his disciples, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." (Mk 6:31)

The first reading for mass today holds a different key to both of the scriptures. It also talks about how God does not grow faint or weary. It says "Though young men faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, they that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings, they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint."

This reading from Isaiah has a great deal to do with today's gospel, because Christ's yoke was to live by God's commandments. Young people often have to find this out for themselves, because they make a lot of really foolish mistakes sometimes. Disregarding God's commandments *always* leads to suffering. It takes some of us a pretty good while to figure this out for ourselves. Our lives are miserable when we disregard God's commandments. This doesn't need a lot of explanation because we all know that we were created to worship God, we were created for genuine love, and to live a life of service to others. Our sins cause a great deal of suffering for ourselves and others as well. Even indirectly, working too many hours, can affect marriages and family relationships, because of our pride in our position at work or the possessions we own. Other people's sins also cause a lot of suffering for us sometimes too, though.

Christ's yoke is easy. The challenging part is to *learn from him*. That is enough food for thought for the rest of the day!