

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

### Be a Joyful Christian

By Fr. Joseph Pellegrino

I recently heard about two young fellows from Brooklyn, Vinnie and Rocco, who got into a car accident and found themselves standing before the Pearly Gates. “Yo, Pete,” Vinnie said, “it’s Vinnie and Rocco from Brooklyn.” St. Peter took one look at them and said, “I don’t think so.” “Good people come from Brooklyn, Peter, open up the Pearly Gates.” Peter went down and then called God up on the emergency phone. “Lord, we have a problem,” he said, “they are gone.” “The guys from Brooklyn?” God asked. “No,” said St. Peter, “the Pearly Gates.”

I can get away with that joke because I’m one of those greasy looking guys from the Northeast. In fact, a couple of years ago I went to get a haircut in New Jersey. The barber asked if I wanted a part or if I wanted my hair combed back. Oh well, at least I fit in.

There is nothing wrong with an occasional laugh in church or at ourselves. And we all know many Catholics who are serious about their faith but are so sullen that you wonder why they would want to be Christians if they could not be joyful. It is a blessing in our faith that most priests are not constrained by concerns of job security in their preaching and are therefore not afraid to proclaim that which might not be popular. However, it appears to me that preaching about negative things, the bad news, has become more prevalent than preaching about the positive, the good news. I have friends in other parishes who tell me that all they hear are negative sermons and that they routinely leave Mass feeling down about themselves and about society. For them Christianity is not joyful, not fun as it should be, but a somber burden inflicted upon them from above.

If you look at the Christian scriptures and the Christian development of the Hebrew scriptures, and if you consider the lives of the saints, the Gospel, the Good News, is joyful.

Consider today’s readings. The Gospel tells us to be united to the Lord, to turn our burdens over to him and to allow him to refresh us. The reading says that our souls will find rest for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Jesus says, “Give me all your problems and all your concerns, your many difficulties and trust me.” Turn it all over to the Lord, your feelings of being overwhelmed with financial burdens, the down times in your marriage, the boring aspects of your job, your continual concern for you children, your health concerns, parents or chil-

dren or your own health. Turn it all over to the Lord and be at peace. Have faith that no matter what happens, if you have union with the Lord, all will be well. The first reading, from the prophet Zechariah, tells us to rejoice because the Savior has come. God is not up there, far from us. He is right here, in our hearts

The saints, even the martyrs, especially the martyrs, were people of joy. It is said that the martyrs marched into the Coliseum singing. No matter what happened to them, none of them died in emotional turmoil. They all died at peace. Often I tell you about our patron, Ignatius of Antioch. He valued it as a gift to be allowed to suffer for being a Christian and pleaded with those trying to interfere to allow him to die in joy.

We believe that God became one of us to join us in our turmoil so he could lead us to joy of his peace.

“But, Father,” you might say. “You have no idea the grief I have. A loved one has died recently. Am I not to grieve, not to cry?” No, grieve, cry. That is a sign of the love you have. No one cries over the death of someone they didn’t love. But remember, in the midst of your grief, your inner turmoil, remember that the life of your loved one is transformed, not ended. Mourn missing him or her here, but know that your loved one is in the peace and love of Jesus Christ. In the midst of sorrow we Christians have fundamental joy. The Lord says, “Come to me all you who are weary with life and I will give you rest.”

Yes, we commemorate the Passion of the Lord solemnly during lent. But the tears of Good Friday give meaning to and magnify the joy of Easter Sunday.

We are the Easter people, filled with the joy of the Risen Lord, death defeated by eternal life. We shouldn’t be so somber, so serious, so negative. Maybe some of us, beginning with priests, need that reminder: if your heart is filled with the joy of the Lord, kindly tell it to inform your face.

The presence of the Lord brings joy, peace and refreshment to the soul. This material is used with permission of its author, Rev. Joseph A. Pellegrino, Diocese of St. Petersburg, FL

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Zechariah 9:9-10

Romans 8:9-13

Matthew 11:25-30

July 6, 2014

# 靈 修 生 活

## 從 謙 虛 來 的 平 安

謝 明 輝

在世上有沒有謙虛的君王？歷史上如果有，他一定是偉大的君王，他謙卑自下的事跡一定會被史家記錄留存後世，以歌頌他的品德，宣揚他能夠禮賢下仕。今天的讀經一匝加利亞先知預言的默西亞，就是這樣的君王：「祂謙虛地騎在驢上——而且還是一匹小驢」。謙虛的君王騎著一匹小驢，肯定不是祂的個人喜好，而是祂希望藉著這個行動，來表達祂要講的信息，這正好與本主日的福音內，主耶穌所要講的信息相吻合，就是祂呼籲所有的人：「你們背起我的軛，向我學習吧，因為我是良善心謙的。」

為甚麼主耶穌要作這樣的呼籲呢？思高聖經將瑪竇第十一、十二章標題為天國的奧祕，這奧祕的竅門就是：主耶穌良善心謙的榜樣。祂就是那位騎著一匹小驢的君王，除非人變得如小孩子般的虛心向人學習，天國的奧祕是不能被揭曉的。不是自己以為是智慧和明達的人可以揭曉這天國的奧祕，因為天國的奧祕只可以是由天父所賞賜的，同時除了是主耶穌願意啓示的人外，人的智慧和明達是不能揭曉這天國的奧祕的。所以，不是智慧和明達，而是人的虛心學習，才可以值得天父和主耶穌願意啓示天國的奧祕、天國的喜訊。

有一位外教人士問：「我跟隨了你講解的教會，我會得到些甚麼呢？」我回應說：「平安！真正的平安！主耶穌賞賜的平安。」今日的福音透露了主耶穌的意願，祂願意所有的人得到平安！祂承諾了給像小孩子般的人啓示，祂苦口婆心地警告自視有智慧和明達的人，祂更邀請其餘的你們這些人，所有勞苦和負重擔的人。試問在現今百物騰貴，特別是樓價高企的香港，有誰不要為生活、為供樓而要勞苦和負重擔的呢？兩千年前當主耶穌講話時，祂非常理解我們現時的困難，祂願意藉著今天福音的說話，給我們安慰，給我們信心，給我們祂賞賜的平安，給了我們祂的承諾：「你們的心靈必會得到安息！」

因為主耶穌要我們背起的——祂的軛和祂的擔子——是柔和的、是輕鬆的。正如聖保祿在讀經二所提醒我們：「如果天主的聖神住在我們內，你們就不屬於肉體，而屬於聖神」的了。柔和和輕鬆是在我們內的聖神在工作，免卻了我們「肉體的債」，使我們能夠以信德跟隨復活的主耶穌基督，和與在我們內永遠陪伴著我們、教導指引著我們的聖神而生活，我們便會經驗到上主所賜的柔和、輕鬆和平安。 摘自「公教報」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 七 月 六 日

匝 9:9-10; 羅 8:9-13; 瑪 11:25-30