**Friday (A New Catechism)**

Beneath the surface each of us contains within us the history of sin and grace. This is what lies deepest: the harshness, the scandal, the indifference, the unbelief, the despair, the hatred, to which God responds again and again with grace. Time and time again he has renewed his gift to us of the Holy Spirit. This is the true dimension of the history of goodness. It is the history of the power of sin and the greater power of grace. If there is anything to mark out those who have tried to live out the life of Jesus in the ranks of humanity, it is the fact that they have been penetrated with the sense of their own insufficiency and of the glory of God.

**Scripture (Isaiah 9:1-2,5)**

***The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; on the inhabitants of a country in shadow as dark as death light has blazed forth. You have enlarged the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest time, as they exult when they are dividing the spoils. For a son has been born for us, a son has been given to us, and dominion has been laid on his shoulders; and this is the name ha has been given, ‘Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace, to extend his dominion in boundless peace.***

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14th Week of Ordinary Time

 **Our yoke: commitment, purpose, joy.**

***The prophet Zechariah (Zc. 9:9-10) paints a wonderful picture of how life was going to be when God’s plans were fulfilled. The Israelites’ rich, powerful and proud neighbours would be brought low (by God’s actions) and then something genuinely new would happen. There is no mention of Israel saying, ‘Now it’s our turn to be top dog’; there would be no revenge, or of exiling the opponents; no plans for further conquests. The king would set the tone by entering Jerusalem on a donkey. People then (as now) would expect a ‘victorious’ and ‘triumphant’ king to enter with full pomp and a display that said, ‘I’m in charge; I’m the power now’ – which in those days would be riding a fine, commanding horse. This king, though, will ride on a donkey, a humble beast and, more importantly in this case, a clear sign that he is not a war-like ruler.***

***The more accurate translation of ‘victorious’ would be ‘upright’ or ‘just’ in the sense that he is God’s chosen ruler, the one who will know God’s ways and be humble enough to be guided by them, rather than by ‘conventional wisdom’, or by a defensive attitude, and certainly not an all-conquering attitude. As a result, he doesn’t just signal good intentions, (for peace) - he banishes the means of war.***

***What Zechariah is defining are the characteristics of the new way of living that will be brought in by the Messiah, God’s chosen one. As Christians, we can see this happening in Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, although the religious leaders – the experts – obviously failed to see Jesus as the Messiah. Earlier in the Gospel, Matthew gives a hint as to why, (Mt. 11:25-30), when he thanks God for ‘hiding these things from the learned and the clever’. It wasn’t the learning that was the problem – Jesus is not promoting ignorance! – but the learned people, i.e. the religious authorities. They were so sure of their own learning and expertise that it was no longer God but their own understanding of the Law that was at the heart of their religion. There was no relationship with the living God, so when Jesus came along with his unique relationship with God, (‘No one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son...’) and invited everyone into the deep relationship he had with his Father (‘.. and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.’), they were unable to perceive that God was present. The ‘mere children’ were the disciples who had put all their trust in Jesus and were open to listening to his teachings.***

***Jesus’ invitation for the overburdened and weary to rest and to shoulder his yoke might seem a bit of a contradiction, but he is referring to the Pharisees’ view of God and the Law that is so burdensome to people. The Rabbis in Jesus’ time would refer to the Law as the ‘yoke’, and because of the multiplication of rules governing every aspect of life, with the understanding that ‘sinners’ were soon outside the Law, and therefore outside God’s love, this yoke was rigid, joyless and wearying. It had little to do with God.***

***Jesus invited people to leave that way and accept his much lighter burden and easier yoke. He was not saying, ‘Follow me and God will look after you. Life will be easy.’ His law, or yoke – Love God, love neighbour – was light in the sense that it was simple. It is a yoke that harnesses us to his work. As with all fulfilling work, it might be hard at times, and tiring, but it doesn’t make you weary. Note that Jesus says ‘Shoulder my yoke’. I think that sharing a yoke with Jesus is a commitment worth making as it brings us closer to him and engages us in his work.*** Martin Bennett

**Monday (Pope Francis: *Evangelii Gaudium)***

We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which can­not mislead or disappoint. It penetrates to the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. But this conviction has to be sustained by our own constantly renewed experience of sa­vouring Christ’s friendship and his message. It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evange­lization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him

**Scripture (Matthew 11:27-30)**

***Jesus exclaimed, ‘Yes, Father, that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.***

**Tuesday (Carlo Carretto)**

The peace promised by Jesus communicates to the soul such a sense of ‘new life’, such a ‘chaste joy’ despite the tremendous trials. At bottom, what is the real difficulty of living on earth? Is it not surmounting pain, fear, illness, old age, death? Well if we have found something which enables us to overcome these negative aspects of our earthly pilgrimage, which helps us to smile through our tears, to hope even as we decline, to be certain of life even in death, we have experienced in ourselves the victory brought by Christ. God communicates his love, and by living this love of his we live in him and share in his ‘victory’ during our struggle on earth.

**Scripture (Hebrews 12:1-2)**

***With so many witnesses in a great cloud all around us, we too, then, should throw off everything that weighs us down and the sin that clings so closely, and with perseverance keep running in the race which lies ahead of us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which lay ahead of him, he endured the cross, disregarding the shame of it, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God’s throne.***

**Wednesday (Cardinal Newman)**

The Christian has a deep, silent, hidden peace. We can bear ourselves; we can (as it were) joy in ourselves, for it is the grace of God within us, it is the presence of the eternal comforter, in which we joy. We can lay our head down at night and know that God has been all things to us, and that nothing is not ours which God could give us. More thankfulness, more holiness, more of heaven we need indeed, but the thought that we can have more is not a thought of trouble but of joy.

**Scripture (Philippians 4:4-7)**

***Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful. Let your good sense be obvious to everybody. The Lord is near. Never worry about anything; but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude, and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.***

**Thursday (Fr. Richard Rohr)**

All false religion proceeds in a certain sense from one illusion: people say, “Thy Kingdom come” out of one side of their mouth, but they don’t out of the other side say, “My kingdom go.” It happens, when we try to have both these kingdoms reign, when we say that the Lord is Lord of our lives, but in fact we are lord of our own lives. When Jesus is not the Lord of our lives, we will most assuredly lord it over one another. That attitude has resulted in the domination, competition and success agenda of western civilisation.

**Scripture (2 Corinthiaans 5:17-19)**

***For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and a new being is there to see. It is all God’s work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone’s faults against them, but entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.***