

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time – A

One of the things Jesus noticed almost immediately when he began his preaching mission was that the people who had the most ability to understand his message were the ones most resistant to it.

Jesus walked clearly in the tradition of the Law and the prophets but those who were most schooled in that tradition were the ones who gave him the most trouble.

They were the ones in power. They had their way of doing things. They had their way of interpreting the Law and the tradition, and they had even added to it all kinds of rules and regulations that were supposed to help the people follow it.

But the opposite happened. Everything became so burdensome that only those who didn't have to work hard for a living were able to follow the scribes' and Pharisees' instructions.

I'm sure Jesus found that very frustrating!

What he also found, though, was that there were people who did actually get what he was saying. They understood the message and were taking it to heart.

These people belonged to the "poor in spirit," those who know their need for God and know better than to think they have everything figured out.

They knew that trying to follow all the rules and regulations of the scribes and Pharisees was leading them nowhere.

They also knew that they could not just give up. They needed God, and they needed a way to God.

The prayer that Jesus raises up to God in today's Gospel is a window into how Jesus saw the whole thing playing out.

It's like he himself was coming to a realization of how the Father was working in the midst of his ministry.

He expresses his amazement and gratitude, and shows that he himself knew that he had to follow the Father's lead.

He seems to be discovering the Father's will at the same time that he accepts it as his own.

That makes it clear that, for Jesus the life of faith is not about following rules and regulations so much as it is about being in relationship with the One who gives life.

He talking about the knowing that happens in relationship. It's a kind of knowing that is growing and ongoing.

Jesus taught by example more than anything, and his disciples must have learned a lot by seeing how Jesus took the time and trouble to seek the Father's will and then accepted it.

That approach is what formed the foundation of what he then preached and taught.

That makes the last verses of today's Gospel understandable. The yoke that Jesus refers to is the yoke of learning

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from the Father, the yoke that avoids the trap of trying to have everything figured out ahead of time and is open to discovering grace in unexpected places.

When Jesus says he is meek and humble of heart, that's exactly what he is talking about—that he must stick with what God the Father is revealing to him, even if it is new to him; that he has to rely on God the Father showing him the way to proclaim the Good News.

Being humble of heart means being willing to accept this way of being and doing things.

For us it means that it is not enough to simply say, “That’s what I learned growing up” as if we were stuck with a grade school level of understanding.

We have to continue to be active in seeking the will of God in the here and now, and when we discover that it is leading us into territory that is new to us, not to shrink back in fear.

God’s will can be accomplished in us even when we are not sure where we are going or how we are going to get there, when it includes a moment of discovery.

God knows. God is leading us. No one else can bring us to the fullness of life that He promises. We follow where He leads.