

A Homily Preached at Mount Angel Abbey
Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Deuteronomy 7:6-11; Saint Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine. This traditional prayer, of course, finds its origin in today's gospel from Saint Matthew. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." The burden of the Lord, His sacred passion and death, is a yoke that we are called to share. The image comes to mind of two oxen bound together by the wood of the yoke they share: two working as one, accomplishing together what is not possible alone.

The Book of Deuteronomy reminds us that we have been chosen. The Lord has a special love for us not based on any accomplishment of our own, but simply as an act of the inscrutable will of God. "It was not because you were the largest of all nations that the Lord has set his heart on you and chose you, for you are really the smallest of all nations. It was because the Lord loved you . . ." And how did God demonstrate this love? "He brought you out with His strong hand from the place of slavery."

Our Savior reveals a meek heart, that is, a heart enduring injury with patience and without resentment. The heart of Jesus is also humble, His life offered in submission, without reservation, to the fulfillment of the will of the Father. Out of love alone, we have been redeemed, for the heart of God is set on us. The love of God is poured out from the Heart of Jesus pierced for our salvation. The Heart of Jesus bears no resentment for the price paid. The Sacred Heart is full of longing for the Passover that would set us free. His Heart, totally devoted on redeeming us, is fixed only on the delight of the Father who has received again that which was lost and so precious to Him. That alone is His joy.

Full of patience, void of resentment, totally fixed on the Father's will: this is a model of Christian love as it is revealed to us in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Quite fantastically, we have been chosen to share in the accomplishment of the Father's will, a goal we cannot achieve by ourselves. But, yoked with Christ this burden becomes easy and light, and so we pray: Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine.