

Lectionary readings: Zechariah 9: 9-12; Psalm 145: 8-14; Romans 7: 15-25a; Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

For reflection and prayer

- **Zechariah 9:** This is the passage quoted in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The words here are addressed to the Jews who were in exile in Babylon and are words of hope. For us today they speak of Jesus who came in humility to bring peace, inviting us to reach out in love to all, to accept one another, to resolve conflicts and to work towards a time when there will be no need of weapons of war. But it starts on an individual level. We are called to live at peace with those around us. Let's pray this week for relationships that have broken down and ask God to give us a spirit of humility and love so that we can work to bring healing to the situation.
- **Psalm 145:** This is a hymn of praise to God who is kind, merciful, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love, good to everyone, full of compassion, faithful and gracious. v14: *'The Lord helps the fallen and lifts up those bent beneath their loads.'* Probably all of us are carrying heavy burdens today, whether of work, guilt, sadness, anger, resentment, fear, anxiety etc. God wants us to take our burdens to Him and share them with Him. So it may be good for us to identify the burdens we are carrying and let God show us how we can journey on, set free from those burdens - most of which will have to do with the past or future - so that we are able to enjoy the blessings God has for us today.

- **Romans 7:** Here Paul is describing the experience of each one of us: we know what is the right thing to do, the right response to make, but somehow we don't do it. Paul gives us a clue as to the reason for this. v15: *'I'm full of myself.'* v18: *'I don't have what it takes.'* v20: *'Something has gone wrong deep within me.'* (The Message) Paul asks the question: *'Is there no one who can do anything for me?.... Thank God ... Jesus Christ can and does.'* We can thank God, too, that God has given us all we need to live as He wants us to, in a way that is life-giving for ourselves and others. So let's open our hearts each day this week and allow God through His Spirit to help us respond and live like Jesus.
- **Matthew 11:** One of my favourite passages in The Message is v28-30: *'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.'* It's not more religion we need, but opening our hearts to God and sharing our life with Him, walking through each day in His company, letting Him guide us and learning from Him to live out of *'unforced rhythms of grace'*, rather than being burdened and weighed down.

A prayer

'Breathe in time with the rhythm of the earth: ebbing tide, night and day, seasons of rest, growth, beauty and fruitfulness. Breathe in time with your own being: beat of heart, rate of pulse, patterns of work and rest. Breathe in time with the Spirit of God: breadth of prayer, depth of solitude, height of hopefulness. Breathe in time with silence: be still and know that He is God.' (Donald Hilton)