

Third Sunday after Pentecost, 3/7/2011, Holy Trinity
Matthew 11: 28-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

I was struggling on campus with the top of a jar of vegemite. My hands would not move it.

I said to a woman who was present, “I’ve given it my best shot “.

“No, you haven’t”, she replied, “You haven’t asked me to try.”

I handed it over and the lid was removed very quickly.

The burden of arthritic hands was overcome by handing it over to someone who was not afflicted in this way.

In this morning’s Gospel reading Jesus promises us rest for our soul by coming to him.

He promises us that we can set down our burden and yokes and take up his easy ones instead.

How many of you have seen a bullock team at work?

This is any number of bullocks yoked together in pairs with a wooden yoke around their neck.

The purpose of the yoke is to harness the power of the animals to do the work required of them.

They are usually attached to a dray to carry a heavy load or to drag logs out of a forest.

Remember that Jesus was a carpenter and one of the things he could have made was yokes.

I have no doubt that the yokes he made would have been perfect fits for the animals that were to use them.

They would be just right for the job.

Jesus invites us to take a yoke just like this, made exactly for us by someone who knows us inside out, our troubles, our hardships, our needs, our strengths and weaknesses.

But not only that and remembering that the bullock team's yoke is for them to pull in pairs, we find that Jesus is alongside of us working as a pair to move the burden that is overcoming us.

Why, then, are we so reluctant to take up Jesus' invitation to share with him?

Too often, we want to handle things ourselves: we want to be independent: we are reluctant to show any weakness.

But the real strength is in knowing that we are not alone, that we can let go, that we can hand over and pull together with Jesus to lighten the burden.

"Let go and let God" becomes our catch-cry.

So we live knowing that Jesus is yoked to us, sharing in our decisions, our joys and sorrows, our burdens and our triumphs and so we live with God and with people, knowing that when we are weary and heavy-laden, Jesus gives us rest.