

## DECEMBER 10 2025 FATHER JOHN BERTAO

On this second week of Advent, I have a couple questions that I would pose to you.

First of all, *“How’s life treating you?”* And second, *“How are you celebrating your life?”*

On my last vacation back home, I met a family friend who looked very tired and had aged many, many years more than normal. We have known each other for many years, so, I asked her the two questions that I just posed to you. With tears in her eyes, she explained some of the challenge that she was facing, and with her permission, who, by the way, does watch the TV Mass on a regular basis, I got her permission to share some of her concerns that she expressed to me with you.

First, she said, her aging parents need her attention 24 hours a day. Also, her two children are separated and have children of their own. Her husband is working long hours to make ends meet. No time for family gathers, and so on, and she is suffering from exhaustion, both physical and mental. (Laughing) And, no surprise there.

All I could do was recall the words of Jesus, and I quote, *“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”* End quote.

See, she needed—She needed someone who would listen to her and not judge her, or offer her suggestions or remedies. The whole concept of—of yoke takes back to my childhood when we used to, uh, to work the fields and carry heavy loads. A custom-made yoke made it possible for the animals to share the load evenly and work together without getting over-tired. Jesus’ wisdom on using yoke as a way of sharing and

relaying—relying on God’s help is very relevant to us. Was then, and it is today.

See, Jesus invites us to embrace a way that will truly aid us, no matter which burdens is ours that we have to bear, and we all have on one level or another. *“To wear God’s yoke”* is God’s way of saying to us, *“Yes, yes, I know it’s heavy. And, yes,”* God is saying, *“I am here with you, keeping you safe and helping you as long as you trust.”*

So, how is life then treating you? Do you need some help from your own burdens? Can I share with you a comment from one of my sources that asks the question, *“What kind of yoke does the Lord Jesus have in mind for each one of us, and how can it be good for us?”*

For example, the Jewish people use the image of yoke to express their submission to God. They spoke of the yoke of the law and the yoke of commandments, the yoke of the Kingdom, the yoke of God. Jesus says His yoke is easy. The Greek word for *“easy”* can also mean *“well-fitting.”* Yokes were tailor-made to fit the oxen for pulling objects together and evenly. We, all of us, are committed to put on the sweet yoke of Jesus and to live the heavenly way of life, and, in happiness.

In other words, with Jesus, we are never ever alone. Oxen were yoked two by two, so Jesus invites each one of us to be yoked with Him, to unite our lives to Him, in our will and His way, to do His way, because, He always will help us and never abandon us.

There’s a story of a man who, uh, once met a boy carrying a small, crippled lad on his back. *“That’s a heavy load that you’re carrying there, young man,”* the man said to the boy. And the boy replied, *“He ain’t heavy. He’s my brother.”* That was the reply. Now, you’re probably smiling because you’re saying, *“Oh, father, I’ve heard that song so*

*many times before.*” Yes, yes, I’m sure you have. We’re that old, are we? This was for the holidays of, what, 1969. A wonderful song.

No burden is too heavy when it’s given in love and carried in love. See, when we “*yoke*” or “*unite*” our lives to Jesus the Christ, He also carries our burdens with us and gives us the strength to follow in His way of love.

As we enter more deeply into the Advent season, I pray that you are not stressing out about family dinners, gifts of material things, and, you know, other temporal stuff that is here and it’s gone tomorrow. Keep in mind, please. Keep in mind that the yoke of Christ’s Kingdom can liberate you from the burden of guilt and temporal things that some people without faith stress over needlessly. Only the Lord Jesus can lift the burden of sin and the weight of hopelessness from us.

Jesus then used the analogy of a yoke to explain how we can be united with Him, and together, lift the burden of sin and despair in His glory, in His freedom, in His love. In participation with Him, we are never ever alone.

As for the family friend I mentioned, after our chat, she simply looked at me and said) “*..Thank you. Thank you so much. I just needed a shoulder and assurance in knowing that I am not alone, and that I have more blessings than many, many other people do.*”

I pray then, my dear friends in Christ, as follows.

Lord Jesus, inflame my heart with love for you and for your ways, and help me to exchange the yoke of rebellion for the sweet yoke of submission to your holy and loving word. Set me free from the folly of my own sinful—sinful ignorance and rebellious pride, that I may wholly

desire what is good, and in accord with your will, that I always do Your will, that I always have You by my side.

And how do we do that? Maybe you can just take some time. Go to church, and, if you are able to go to church, maybe go 15 minutes early, and sit by the blessed sacrament. Surrender everything to the Lord. He's right there. He's just waiting. He's just waiting for us to go in and say, *"Hi, I'm here. Remember me? I saw you last week. I'm here. And, I've got this. You know this pain that I've got in my family? That I have in my life? Can you please, Lord, give me the courage to surrender?"*

Because we need to ask for—for help, but at the same time, we need to surrender whatever we need. Have the courage, the humility. Get rid of the pride, because that stands in the way. But, instead, give it to Him. Why? Because He loves you. And He'll never ever abandon you.