

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

My Burden Light Second Week of Advent Wednesday, December 11, 2013 8:15 AM
Is 40:25-31; **Mt 11:28-30** (St. Damasus, pope) (God wants to bring comfort and relief into people's lives.)

“For my yoke is easy and my burden light.”

The burden he is speaking of is the work that his disciples are called to do. And he is calling it **light in contrast to the burden of the disciples of the Pharisees**, who have very heavy loads to carry because, for whatever reason, and not to judge their sincerity, but of for whatever reason, the Pharisees, the rabbis, believed in a very difficult way of living. **They believed God was a very stern taskmaster.** The Torah was to be followed to the nth degree, and not only the written Torah, which we can read today in the Bible, in the Old Testament, but an oral Torah, which we don't even know in its entirety. Some of that has found its way into the Talmud, the first part called the Mishnah; much of the oral Law probably is there. And there are, I think, about ten thousand additional rules covering every imaginable thing.

And **Jesus was very critical of this.** He did not believe this was the way to honor God. He didn't think this was what God was looking for. And he makes it very clear what he believes. **He believes that the oral Law is the invention of human beings. He believes the written Law is from God, but that it can be summarized in two very simple ways: to love God and neighbor as self, and that if people do that, they are pleasing God.** This is a burden which is light, according to Jesus. That's his point.

And he does believe, as did the ancient Israelites, that **God wants to bring comfort and relief into people's lives**, that God really wants to be a warrior defending people, that God wants to be a savior saving people, that God intends to be a redeemer freeing people. That's God's intention. **That got lost in the religion of Torah**, a religion of law, a religion of letter, and actually a religion of Scripture.

We have to be careful even about Scripture, that we don't turn it into something it isn't. In the Reformation some of these same issues came out, and, in fact, **at every renewal that come out: some people too strict.** We can think of Calvinism in its puritanical tendencies. The same happened also in the Counter Reformation in the Catholic Church: **puritanical tendencies, overbearing authoritarianism.** This is not, according to Jesus, what's what. "For my yoke is easy and my burden light."