

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year A

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **First reading:**

(Zechariah 9.9-10)

*The King on a Donkey*

The link of this reading to the gospel reading is not immediately obvious, at least in English translation. The use of a donkey as a mount is a sign that the king will be humble, just as Jesus in the gospel says that he is humble of heart. This is even more literally fulfilled when Jesus makes his messianic entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday mounted 'on a colt, the foal of a donkey'.

In the spirituality of the centuries after the Babylonian exile and leading up to the coming of Christ, this quality of humility, rejection of all pomp and pride of position was very central. Israel could claim no success of distinction of its own and was forced to rely on the Lord. The poor and humble were the chosen ones of the Lord.

Especially in the Lukan stories of Jesus' infancy, it is made clear that the blessing comes to the poor and humble. Mary and Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, are both poor and disadvantaged. Mary can find no decent place to give birth to her son. Jesus is greeted by impoverished, hireling shepherds. Joseph can afford only the turtledove, offering of the poor. Simeon and Anna have the disadvantage of advanced old age.

### **Question:**

*How is the aspect of Christ as prophet helpful to our understanding?*

### **Second reading:**

(Romans 8.9, 11-13)

*The Spirit is Alive in You*

Chapter 8 of Romans, from which readings for the next three Sundays are chosen, is the chapter of the Spirit.

We have seen that the Christian, baptized into Christ, lives with his life, the life of the Spirit of Christ. This means that the Christian's whole value system is that of the Spirit, the reverse of the values of the 'flesh'. 'Flesh' in Paul does not mean, as it often does in modern parlance, only the grosser, 'carnal' desires such as sex, gluttony, drunkenness. In the Letter to the Galatians 5.18-21 (and in many ways Galatians is a preliminary to Romans), the 'works of the flesh' includes such non-physical things as sorcery, rivalry, quarrels, malice. The concept of 'flesh' therefore centres on unchecked or unschooled natural desires, self-indulgence as opposed to self-control.

To live by the law of the Spirit is therefore not to live by the Law of Moses, which merely checks external actions; neither is it to live by the law of the flesh, but it is to live by the Spirit of Christ, from which spontaneously well up love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, trustfulness, gentleness and the other Christ-like motivations. In this sense, the Law of Christ does not restrain from without but impels from within.

### **Question:**

*What would your reaction be if Paul called you a baby to be fed on milk?*

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year A

## **Gospel:**

*(Matthew 11.25-30)*

### *Father and Son*

This much loved and encouraging passage tells of the intimacy of the relationship between father and son in a way that no other passage of the synoptic gospels does. It is reminiscent of those passages in John 5 that unfold the equality of father and son: the son does nothing but what he sees the father doing; the father loves the son so that he entrusts all things to the son, and the son gives life just as the father gives life. Then comes the gentle invitation of the son to all who are overburdened.

The 'yoke' is often a symbol of the Law of Moses, which could seem burdensome with its many commands, though it was also valued as God's revelation of himself to his own people in love. Christ is not a tyrannical master, but is a sympathetic, gentle and humble leader who shares his life with his followers. The 'yoke' or Law of Christ, as we saw with regard to the second reading, is the interior impulse of the Spirit. It cannot be burdensome, since it is a joy to carry, a way of living with Christ and by his Spirit. Even the joy of martyrs, subjected as they are to physical pains, is a constant feature of accounts of martyrdom.

## **Reflection:**

*What does Jesus mean by his 'yoke'? Do you find it comfortable?*

---