

Readings

Mt 21:1-11

Is 50:4-7

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Phil 2:6-11

Mt 26:14–27:66

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If there is an animal that you most identify with, what would it be? An eagle? A lion? Or perhaps it is a tiger? But how many of you would say a donkey? Not many, I would guess.

Imagine a sports team being called “The Donkeys.” Before and during every game the announcement would say: “Go Donkeys!!” and “You got this, Donkeys!!”

Now think back a little while to the blessing of the palms. We heard the Gospel reading from St. Matthew where Jesus tells two of his disciples:

“Go into the village, and you will find an ass tethered, and a colt (donkey) with her. Untie them and bring them here to me. And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, ‘The master has need of them.’ Then he will send them at once.”

“The master has need of them.” We all want to be tigers and lions and eagles, but there is something very profound about this need that Jesus has for the donkey. Let’s just consider this for a moment in 4 ways.

There is a humility in the donkey. St. Paul has something very profound to say about the humility of Jesus the Son of God: “Though Jesus was in the form of God he did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself,

becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. But because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This is the utter humility of God - that's Glory.

St. Augustine says there are three ways to get to heaven: Humility, Humility, and Humility. It is Christ's total free will and total love for each of us – obedient until death – that we must follow.

Next, a donkey does not draw attention to itself, but it draws attention to the one who rides upon – and that is Jesus. We can carry Jesus, like St Christopher – “Carrier of the Christ.” And if we are Christophers, carriers of Christ, then we called to carry our crosses – as we heard and as we will actively remember this week, particularly on Good Friday. Think about that. Jesus doesn't get on a lion, or a tiger, but a donkey. Humility, humility, humility.

Next, the donkey is not there for its own plans: it is there for the needs of the master. I know you who listen are amazing with gifts of intelligence, athleticism, social skills, humour, analytics, writing, math, whatever it may be. Are they *your* gifts to boast about? Is it not better to boast about God's gift within you? God's gift *of* you? They are not for one's own glory, but for the glory of God. You can't be like that song from *The Sound of Music* that gets caught on repeat: “Do, Ray. Me. Me. Me. Me. Me.” Life isn't about me and it isn't all about my own projects and plans. **It is about Jesus Christ.**

And finally, Jesus gives this command: “**Untie them and bring them here to me.**” Jesus unties us from what ties us down. What ties us down a lot of the time is sin. Lazarus was unbound from the straps of death around him last Sunday.

This journey to Calvary that begins on a donkey is nothing other than a desire to lovingly liberate us from our own enslavement to go out beyond, and to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, to be united with the Father. Jesus trod that path and shows us, gives us the Grace, to enter that narrow gate. The adulation of Jesus on Palm Sunday will lead soon to him being beaten, the beard on his cheeks plucked, his face set like flint to the buffets and spitting. There is NO Shame and there is NO disgrace....for God is My Help! There is something mysterious about suffering that leads to us being more human and more humble, if we but choose it.

Jesus dies on the cross to liberate us from sin. We can live by the Light of His Grace. I heard it once said that “as we let our own light shine, we consciously give others permission to do the same.” As we are liberated from our fear and sin, our presence automatically liberates us and others, for in it we see the presence of God.

Being a donkey isn't enslavement or servitude; it is liberation...total liberation. It is the truth of our dignity. In being a donkey we know the truth, and the truth sets us free. This Holy Week, Be A Donkey. And so, the Holiest of Weeks begins...And so the Passion Begins. And I say to you: Be untied for Christ. Belong to Christ.

Go Donkeys!