

TRINITY 4
Zech 9:9-10
Rom 8:9;11-13
Mt 11:25-30

Today's readings focus on Jesus as king and what living as a subject of God's Kingdom means.

The prophet Zechariah wrote to his people during their exile in Babylon after the destruction of their Temple in 587BC. He prophesied to the dejected Jews that God would once again restore their kingdom and their king would ride into Jerusalem humbly, on a donkey which was the royal beast of King David.

Jesus did this on Palm Sunday when the crowds followed him waving palm branches and acknowledging him as the Son of David. But St Matthew also tells us that the religious and political elites were disturbed by Jesus' carefully staged entry into the Holy City.

Why were they disturbed? The Religious elites of Jerusalem, like all elites, including those of today, think they know everything, including the mind of God. They are even prone to correcting God concerning his intentions for the salvation of his people which he seems not to have made clear in the first place. Comments such as, 'The Scriptures may say this, but God's real intention which he has made clear to us is this,' are not uncommon.

The Jewish elites knew that there was no way that God would choose a self-proclaimed rabble-rousing country bumpkin like Jesus as his Chosen One. They know how things work. There is no humility among elites. In contrast, the humble know they know nothing, so are open to God's will. The crowds that followed Jesus into Jerusalem knew what they had seen and heard, and that was enough for them to recognise who he was and so to trust him. Recognition of Jesus' identity can only come to humans as a gift of God the Father.

More than this, the Father can only be known through the Son. "No-one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn14:6). To recognise a rejected, crucified wandering preacher as God's Son and Saviour requires deep trust. To live in that trust requires obedience, courage and strength. This is why Jesus assures his disciples that it can be done because he will be alongside us. He says his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

A yoke is a shaped wooden beam that fits around the necks of oxen and camels to ensure that they pull together. Yokes were also fitted around the necks of criminals and prisoners of war for control purposes. Yet in Jewish literature, the yoke was also an image of freedom and life.

The Jews spoke of the yoke of God's service; the yoke of the law; of wisdom; the commandments; of repentance and the yoke of the kingdom of heaven. They never spoke about the yoke of Moses or of any other person. Yet Jesus says to the weary, the despairing, those at rock bottom and the lost, "**My** yoke is easy and **My** burden is light.

He doesn't say that being yoked to him is not demanding, but he doesn't demand more of a person than that person is able to give. Jesus' yoke is light because he is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is both our journey and our destination. But yokes are only easy to wear if they are tight and correctly fitting. It is ill-fitting and slack yokes that cause pain. Only fully committed discipleship is possible and that means commitment to what God has revealed to and through the Church. Pick and choose and Catholic lite Christianity has never worked, does not work and will never work because they are ill fitting yokes. Perhaps this is why the reformists are hell bent on trying to re-design the yoke of Jesus, rather than reviewing how they wear it.

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