



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Palm Sunday Year B

They brought the colt to Jesus

Readings: Isaiah 50: 4-7, Ps 21, Philippians 2: 6-11, Mark 14: 1 – 15: 47

The common Ass doesn't get too good a press. His name is a byword for stupidity. In his male form, jackass, his stupidity is elevated from inadvertent ignorance to the deliberate ostentatious flouting of idiocy. To call a man a 'jackass' is to seek to draw attention to his obvious detachment from reality and utter demonstrable buffoonery. In more sophisticated language we might refer to his ideas/proposals/philosophy/politics as - ASININE – implausible and self-evidently foolish.

All this is a pretty heavy burden to bear for the beast who, in primitive society, is already overburdened by the weight of man's ignorance and, all too often, cruelty. It is, therefore, humbling and reassuring to reflect that the dumb beast of burden who bears these insulting comparisons with his 'Oh so wise' master, turns up centre stage at some key moments in salvation history.

Today, chosen by and bearing Jesus Himself, the humble ass finds herself centre stage of the central drama of human history, greeted and welcomed into the Holy City, the bearer of the King, stepping carefully, with her precious burden, over the palm branches and festive cloaks laid down in Jesus' path as a

sign of homage and obeisance. She will wear forever, across her shoulders and her back, the sign of the Cross.

But this is not a lone incident, an intrusion into the extraordinary.

The humble ass bears Our Lady, heavily pregnant, the long rocky road from Nazareth to Bethlehem and thence, in flight, to Egypt.

It is the humble ass who bears the wood of the sacrifice for the three day journey of Abraham and Isaac to Mount Moriah before Isaac becomes the bearer of his own cross.

It is the same humble creature who gets a special mention in the Ten Commandments – an object of envy and covetousness on a par with a man's wife, apparently. He also, in divine law, has to have Sabbath off, the same as his master.

It is the offspring of the humble beast who will be charged, by the great warrior lord of Assyria, Naaman, with the sacred task of bringing two backpacks worth of the soil of the Holy Land back with him so that he can kneel on holy ground while he worships the one true God who has healed him. It is the ass who will carry the bread of life back to the famine struck sons of Israel/Jacob from the storehouses of a forgiving Joseph in Egypt.

It is, astonishingly, Balaam's ass who, sees the Angel of the Lord barring the prophet's road to disobedience and she will not take him there in spite of the furious prophet beating her. Only when the Angel of the Lord opens Balaam's

eyes and tells him that the ass has saved his life does the prophet become as wise as his 'jenny'.

What has all this got to do with Palm Sunday? Well, dare I say it, brothers and sisters that we might do a lot worse than be inspired by the ministry of this, mainly, dumb ass.

We are to bear the wood of the sacrifice with Isaac.

We are to carry the bread of life to the famine regions both physically and spiritually.

We are to make possible the stranger's welcome and healing and worship of the one true God.

We are to bear Our Lady wherever she wishes to go to present Christ to the world.

We are to refuse adamantly at whatever cost to carry the leaders of our generation in the ways of disobedience and folly.

We are to bear Jesus in triumph into the Holy City and bear the consequent markings of the Cross on our backs all the days of our life. For, in our obedience, we, Jackasses and Jennies for God, will show ourselves wiser, in all eternity, than the destructive foolishness of Man.