



**14th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A - A little book of great import
Homily by Fr Robbie Low**

***Readings: 1 Zechariah 9:9-10, Ps 145, Romans 8:9,11-13,
Matthew 11:25-30***

The problem with the lectionary, the Church's choice of readings for any particular day, is that it inevitably leaves us with mere passing reference to great events without being able to go into detail or understand the context or the consequence of these weighty matters in the light of salvation history. So perhaps you will forgive me if I take just one example from today's readings.

In the reading from the Old Testament, we are given a fleeting encounter with the work of the prophet Zechariah. Most people would not have the faintest idea of who he was, when he operated, where his ministry played out or why he exhibited the priorities that he did in his brief written work. Let us delve a little into these things as a way of being enlightened by the Word of God.

First of all a prophet is not some kind of Mystic Meg character referring to a determinist future. He will not give you the winning lottery numbers. The word for 'prophet' itself is a declaration that he speaks God's word. He does so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Anything else is merely private opinion or hot air.

So we are immediately in the territory of the experience of the Holy Trinity. God the Father communicates to us by His Word, the living power of the Divine, which manifests itself incarnate in the person of Christ. He does so by his Holy Spirit, that person of the Godhead who

animates our search for God and presents Christ to the world – as, for example, in the scene of the Annunciation, in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and in the transubstantiation of bread and wine on His altar of sacrifice.

He tells the people, the will of God and, depending on their obedience, or lack of it, to God's commands, the prophet will pronounce the impending judgment on those so instructed and warned. Having been told, there is no excuse. They/we are now responsible.

First then,

Who is Zechariah? Not to be confused with Zachariah the father of John the Baptist. Zechariah is prophesying to the little remnant of Israel, that has returned to their land from the exile in Babylon.

You will recall that the little rump Kingdom of Judah. It had survived the secession of the breakaway kingdom of Israel and the loss of those ten tribes to history in the defeat and exile by the Assyrians. Now, in its turn, Judah itself had been trounced by the might of the great Babylonian Empire and taken into exile in that same country.

The land of Israel was emptied, its future apparently destroyed along with its Temple, just as the prophet Jeremiah had predicted.

But Jeremiah had also predicted that, in exile, the people would learn again the priority of God and return to Him and He, in return, would restore them to their land.

By the great miracle of God, this seemingly impossible dream was realised in the reign of Cyrus, Lord of new Persian Empire which had destroyed Babylon. He was impressed by the reconfigured Jewish community and had granted them leave to go and rebuild Jerusalem.

We are now some seventy years on (c.520BC) and the Jews have returned to their native land. Under Nehemiah - read his book - it's one of the most encouraging scrolls in the whole of Scripture – Jerusalem is being rebuilt stone by stone. The priority, once that security is restored – and remember that, as ever, the Jews are

surrounded by those who would harm or kill them – is to rebuild the Temple.

In the year around 520BC Zechariah (whose name incidentally means 'God remembers') is given the task of speaking God's Word to the people, the beneficiaries of that miracle of return and renewal.

This little book is a fountainhead of hope. We heard today the familiar passage which both foretells and recalls for us the Palm Sunday entry of Christ into the Holy City.

Behold your king comes to you riding on a donkey etc.

May seem like small beer to us but when Adonijah, King David's heir apparent, hears that Solomon has been anointed and is riding the **king's ass**, he knows the coup has succeeded and flees to the sanctuary of the altar to save his life from his usurping brother. So the King will come riding on a donkey - HE DID

But it also contains significant other promises of God to His people.

The Temple will be rebuilt. – 1 v 16 'I will be compassionate to Jerusalem and my Temple shall be rebuilt'. IT WAS

6v15 Those far away will come and rebuild the sanctuary of the Lord.

The Messiah will come. THEY DID. HE HAS.

8v2 'I shall return to Jerusalem', says the Lord, 'and I will dwell in her midst' HE DID

9 v 9 'Your king will come to you, victorious and riding on a donkey.' EXACTLY SO

13 v 10 'They will look upon the one whom they have pierced' INDEED THEY DID

There will, under His rule be prosperity and peace.

The promise to Abraham will be fulfilled – that he would be a blessing to all

8 v20 -23 ...In those days ten gentiles will take a Jew by the sleeve and say, 'We want to go with you since we have learnt that God is with

you'. HOW ELSE HAS THAT BEEN FULFILLED EXCEPT BY THE GOSPEL?

There will be unity among His people.
Sadly, we're still waiting for that one.

The final battle will end in triumph for the people of God.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO THAT

9v16 'The Lord will give them victory on that day' HALLELUJAH

And all this will be achieved, not by human agency or strength but by the people subject and open to the Holy Spirit of God.

4 v 6 'Not by power, not by might but by my Spirit' says the Lord you God. A people of the Pentecost, open to the Holy Spirit of God – that is to say - the CHURCH.

ZECHARIAH is a little book but...

It is full of God's glory and the hope of the faithful.
It is shot through with the promise of redemption and restoration.
It resounds to the final triumph of the Messiah and His Church..

AMEN