

Zechariah 9:9-10; Ps 144; Romans 8:9.11-13; Matt 11:25 -30

How are you Little Flower? How did you become a Saint? And you Joan of Arc, where did you get your courage from? Padre Pio, how did you get the wounds of Christ? Bernadette, why were you chosen to reveal the waters at Lourdes? 'I put on the yoke', came the reply from each.

Upon reading the first lesson from the prophet Zechariah I instantly had a great image in my mind of Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday:

*Behold, your king is coming to you:
Righteous and having salvation is he,
Humble and mounted on a donkey,
On a colt, the foal of a donkey.¹*

This not coincidental. St Matthew in his Gospel quotes from this very text as he describes the scene. Jesus enters Jerusalem very conscious that he is fulfilling prophecy. You could say that he is doing it *in order to fulfil prophecy*. He is signalling to everyone who understands – one can assume everyone who is watching Him – that the Messiah has come, the human figure who will rescue Israel. It important when we read the Bible that we remember that, amongst many things, it is a book of prophetic writings. God does not just act, he tells his people, at least partially and somewhat obscurely, what he is going to do in the future so they can look for it..

As Jesus fulfils prophecy by riding the foal of a donkey up from the Kidron valley and to his death, he is also doing something else: he is obeying the call of his Father's love. He is living out today's Gospel.

If you come to Mass on Saturday mornings at Our Lady of Lourdes, you will hear these words each time:

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,
For I am gentle and lowly in heart,
And you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.²*

I do not think I have always understood them correctly. I think that I have sometimes seen that my relationship with Jesus, the Son of God, was to be my yoke. You know what a yoke is, right? It is a construction of wood and rope and leather that is attaches to two beasts of burden together – like oxen – in order for them to work together to pull a plough. So, I sometimes thought that I was to be kind of tethered to Jesus so that I could do the work he wished me to do. I often did not find that either gentle or light. Walk away from a good career, watch your friends walk away from you, find yourself alienated from family, and realise that much of society views you pretty lowly, one can be tempted to view the call to follow Christ as pretty daunting, and a cross. But I was wrong.

The yoke that I am invited to take upon myself is not strictly the discipleship for Christ. Although the yoke that I am invited to take upon myself is same that Jesus carries, it is not the cross for the sins of the world,

¹ Zechariah 9:10

² Matt 11:29-30

although that image is partially true. This yoke cannot be a 'burden', because a burden is awkward and heavy, and furthermore, this yoke is not an instrument of hard work, but quite the opposite, it will 'give you rest'. This is the paradox at the heart of what Jesus is offering. This is not a yoke that we associate with this word, which is the imposition of hard work. This yoke It is only a yoke in the sense that it binds two together so that everything they do might be the same work. The two yoked together are God the Father and God the Son. The yoke is Divine Love, it is the Holy Spirit.

You might ask, *'What happens if God ask me to do to something that is beyond my power?'* My response is the same: He is not asking you to be tied to divine labour, he is asking you to tie yourself to divine Love, and what you do in love is not a labour. If you accept this 'yoke' of the Holy Spirit from Jesus, then you will know the Father, because he has been revealed to you by your acceptance of the Son. If you know this love then everything becomes both reasonable and possible. This is the yoke under which Jesus entered Jerusalem. This is the source of all hidden things that God wishes you to see. It is the fulfilment of the other part of the prophecy of Zechariah: *'The battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations.'*³ This is the mark of the Saints, because you are united to the Holy One who redeems you.

³ Zec 9:10