

A PARADOXICAL KING

Palm Sunday-C / April 10, 2022

(Luke 19:28-40)

1

n Jesus we have a paradoxical king. We have a Lord who enters Jerusalem escorted by a procession of poor people, riding not on a white stallion but on a donkey, adorned not in gold-embroidered cloths but in the poor cloaks that some have placed on the donkey's back and on the ground. And this "king" needs to borrow a donkey. Jesus is a king who does not even own a donkey!

Where does Jesus' lordship over these events become manifested? *In his sending two of his disciples to fetch a donkey!* Everything is contained in this action. The paradox of Jesus' kingship appears in the insignificance of the ordinary actions he enacts here: God is revealed in a mere man, the Messiah in a pauper, the Savior in a convict, the Just One of Adonai in a crucified man.

In this sending of the two disciples, the *mission* of the Church is also manifested: *Jesus sent ... saying, "Go forth..." Those who were sent went off.* This ecclesial mission requires of Christians, on the one hand, their ability to *give an account* of the deeds they perform to anyone who asks for it, and, on the other hand, it also demands of them the capacity to motivate all their actions on the basis of the Word of the Lord.

The gestures of the Church in her mission to the world do not aim at satisfying or eliminating a need on her part, but are *acts of obedience to the Word of the Lord* and manifest *a need on the Lord's part*. (The text says of the donkey, *The Master has need of it.*) All the Church's attitudes and gestures should tell of a Lord who comes to us in poverty and humility, because only in the sharing of poverty can the decisive encounter between God and

human beings take place. This means that the only riches that the Lord's envoys bring with them are to be found in the faithful repetition of the words that the Lord has given them. These should be words that, while proclaiming the poverty of the Sender, likewise establish the envoys themselves in that same poverty.

This narrative of Jesus' messianic journey to Jerusalem becomes the paradoxical proclamation of a needy and indigent Lord. The Church is thus shown that the needs that afflict her can become a reason for *trust* instead of *anguish*. The Church is strengthened by her trust in the Lord and the power of communion with the poor to whom she addresses the Gospel.

Jesus goes ahead of his followers on his way up to Jerusalem, the "city of peace", but also the city that kills those who are sent to her. Jesus will soon weep over Jerusalem like a jilted Bridegroom, because she has failed to recognize the way of his peace. The path to peace has one basic requirement: *not ever to engage in any kind of violence*. Christ's kingship is not of this world precisely because, unlike worldly kings and tyrants who legalize violence and love to wield it, Jesus radically rejects its use: he refuses ever to create victims. Jesus is the uncompromisingly non-violent King, to the point of assuming all the world's violence upon himself on the cross, which is the ultimate epiphany of his paradoxical kingship.

Let us now go forth in peace, sisters and brothers, driven into the Paschal Mystery by the Holy Spirit, following Jesus our King and sharing his joy at having no power, riches or authority except those that come from his Father's unconditional love.