

14th Sunday, Cycle A, July 9, 2017

I imagine that many of you own a car. But, a hundred years ago, that would not have been the case. Instead, everyone owned horses. Farmers used them to work the fields. Horses pulled buggies. People rode them as commonly as we drive automobiles.

But, about three thousand years ago, very few people owned horses. A farmer might own a donkey to work his fields. But horses cost much more. Only the kings could afford them. And they used horses mainly as vehicles of war.

Horses could run over foot soldiers as easily as a hot knife through butter. The horse was the ancient-day equivalent of the tank, only much faster.

In contrast to the horse, we see the king prophesied by Zechariah in today's first reading, seated on an ass, on a donkey, a slow, plodding donkey. It's not going to win any races. It's a humble animal, and could just as easily belong to a peasant as to a king. But this donkey reflects the gentleness and humility of its rider.

And where is he going? He is going into the city of Jerusalem, as crowds of cheering people line the streets, and wave palm branches, and shout: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

He is going up to the hill of Calvary, to be nailed to a cross.

The king which the prophet Zechariah shows us, is Jesus. He is the prince of peace. He is the one who "shall banish the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; the warrior's bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations."

So, Jesus doesn't want to fight. Does that mean that he is a wimp?

Jesus said, "Whoever lives by the sword shall die by the sword." Instead of taking up a sword, Jesus takes up the cross to fight his battles. Through his sacrifice on the cross, he conquers sin and death. He triumphs over the grave through his resurrection. He overcomes the weakness of the flesh in order to live in the spirit. His struggle is our struggle. He is our king, the prince of peace.

