

## *14th Sunday Year A - Bearers of the Lord*

In the Old Testament, in the Book of Numbers (22:22f) there is the strange story of Balaam's Ass.

Balaam is a Prophet who speaks the word of God to all who seek the way forward in their life - who want to progress. But there is one time when Balaam's own path is blocked and on that occasion when he can progress no further his donkey becomes the mouthpiece of God - is given voice and speaks the Divine message to his rider!

This story has a connection with the event in the ministry of Jesus referred to by the Prophet Zachariah in the First Reading: "Rejoice, shout with gladness, Jerusalem. See your King comes to you, riding on a donkey". The Word of God enters the Holy City carried by an ass; the Great One comes to His people with the help of the humblest of creatures. Such is the way of our God!

At Caesarea Philippi Jesus rejoices that the lowly fisherman Peter is the one whom the Father chooses to reveal the true identity of his Son: "Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, for it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you". As we know, it is Peter who is to become pre-eminently the spokesperson for the Spirit of God in the Christian Community: "Upon this rock I will build my Church".

In today's Gospel we witness how Jesus is moved to exclaim aloud at the ones chosen by God to reveal God's Truth: "I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children".

In the Divine Plan there are others besides Peter who are graced by God to perceive and understand the Truth. "This is what it has pleased him to do".

The Word of God approaches us in unexpected ways, in unexpected persons, in unexpected places. It is an aspect of the virtue of humility to recognise this: God will enter our lives through those whom we are tempted to dismiss, or whom we regard as of little consequence:

Thus, within our own homes, correctives about family relationships can often come through the children - not only through their parents. Children often sense when things are amiss when adults are still deluding themselves, or are unaware of what has already begun to happen.

Within the classroom the teacher can be sometimes startled at the perception of one of those supposed to be on the receiving end of knowledge. The good teacher is always ready to learn from his or her pupils. I once read about a lecturer in a High School in Japan who always bowed low before his students before beginning a lesson: when asked why he did so he replied that he had much to learn from them!

In every generation young people can be more conscious of the errors or absurdities of the society in which they live than the adults who have grown used to the way things are. We need to listen to the rebellious voice of youth sometimes - for the painful home truths it may be expressing about the falsity, hypocrisy, imbalance, stagnation, or downright injustice and evil that there is in our accepted ways of thinking and acting.

Those who work with people who have 'learning difficulties' are often delighted with the very direct appreciation on the part of their charges of the real essentials in life, of what really matters. It would seem that the ones we might consider as lacking our experience, or our competence, or whom we might mistakenly consider as 'fools, idiots, cretins' (and other offensive names) are actually the ones who can, on occasion, most illumine the true situation for us. Such is the message of Jean Vanier and the Houses of Light.

As a community of believers we also have to recognise that the Church has been oftentimes renewed through God's power at work in the lives of little, unknown people, as much as by the high and mighty. In fact, this has more often been the case. Ordinary simple men and women, young people, children, became God's instrument of reform and brought back a worldly church to the values of the Gospel.

In our own time we are still coming to terms with the lesson declared so plainly in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in its Decrees on the Church, on Ecumenism, and on Religious Liberty, that God speaks to us also from *outside* the Roman Catholic family. Much needed correctives can come to our attitudes and actions from other Christians, indeed from other non-Christian communities of faith - even from men and women of integrity who would not claim to know God at all. Although the Truth of God lives, we believe, most fully in the Catholic Church we certainly do not have a monopoly on God's Wisdom.

Today we give thanks to God, we sing our hosannas and (metaphorically) wave our palm branches in honour of Him who comes to us in unexpected ways, people, and places.

We ask the Lord to help us to welcome his Truth as it enters our lives through those we could so easily disregard.

And, as we reflect on our *own* vocation to speak of His life to the world of our times, we rejoice in the fact that he has chosen such 'donkeys' as us to carry his Word into the human city!