

The Rev. Daren J. Zehnle
Annunciation Parish, Shumway, Illinois
1 April 2007

Passion Sunday
At the Mass

"If we want to encounter Jesus and then walk with him on his path, we must ask: on what path does he want to lead us? What do we expect of him? What does he expect of us?"¹

Jesus shows us most clearly the path upon which he wants to lead us: he wants to lead us to the Cross, but this is far too often not what we expect of him.

Too many today expect Jesus to make their lives easy, worry-free and perfect. It frequently is said that if one follows Jesus, there will be no financial needs or burdens and one will be happy, warm and well fed. We expect Jesus to be for us a sort of wish-granting genie. All of this, of course, is sheer rubbish. This is not the Jesus of the Gospels; it is not the God in whose image we are made (cf. Genesis 1:27). It is, rather, the god we make in our own image.

Let me suggest, if you will, that the "colt tethered on which no one has ever sat," of whom we heard earlier, represents each of us. (Luke 19:30)

The colt is tied up and bound; it is not free, but is a slave. Each of us, too, is tethered, in a certain sense. We

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Passion Sunday, 9 April 2006.

are bound by our sins and although Christ Jesus comes to free us from the bondage of sin and death, we still choose to live in sin and we give ourselves over to its power. We allow sin to bind us and hold us captive.

"No one has ever sat" upon this colt because it refuses to have a master other than itself. It will not tolerate a rider, thinking itself somehow freer in this way. The colt enslaves itself to its own desires and refuses to be free to fulfill its purpose, to assist those who need its aid. This we also do to ourselves in our sin.

Jesus says to his disciples, "Untie it and bring it here" (Luke 19:30). In other words, "Set it free from its sins and bring it to me so that I may use it." Jesus then mounts the colt and rides into Jerusalem in humble triumph. As he does so, the colt finds its true and authentic freedom in uniting its will to that of Christ, who is the Mystic Rider.²

Today Jesus says to the Church: "Untie them and bring them here."

How often do we refuse to be mastered by Christ, choosing our own will over and against his, thinking that we know better than him? We refuse to have a yoke placed upon our shoulders to be guided and directed on our pilgrim journey. In our

² See Saint Ambrose, Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, 9.9.

stubbornness, we choose to go it alone, and we make ourselves our own master, thereby becoming the slave of sin.

Today, Jesus, the Mystic Rider, wants to mount us, as it were, if only we will humble ourselves and place ourselves under his gentle mastery.

In the exercise of his Kingship, we learn from Jesus that "we do not find life by possessing it, but by giving it. Love is a gift of oneself, and for this reason it is the way of true life symbolized by the Cross."³

Today, let us allow Jesus to "take his seat in an inward possession of the secret places of [of our hearts] ... ruling the footprints of the mind and curbing the lusts of the flesh. Those who receive such a Rider in their inmost hearts are happy."⁴ Let us, like Simon of Cyrene, take upon ourselves the "heavenly bridle" of the Cross, to be guided by the Lord on the path to heaven.⁵ Amen.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Palm Sunday, 9 April 2006.

⁴ Saint Ambrose, Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, 9.9.

⁵ Ibid.