

A husband and wife were not on speaking terms for a couple of days. So, this couple had to go for a family event in some distant town. As they were driving by country side, of course, both sitting very quiet, the husband saw from his side some donkeys grazing in the field. Pointing to the donkeys the husband sarcastically asked, "Honey are they relatives of yours?". Can you guess what the wife must have replied to this insult? Did they have another fight? Well, the wife quickly shot back, "Yes, honey, they are truly my relatives but by marriage!" Both looked at each other and broke into laughter. So, the donkeys were instrumental in breaking their silence.

Take your own pick and decide whose relatives the donkeys are?

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem on a donkey is highly symbolic. At the time of Jesus when a king went on horseback it meant that he was going to a far war, to conquer other kings; but when a king went on a donkey it meant that he was going to visit his people in peace. Jesus, by traveling on a donkey, was declaring that he was a king of peace and not the one aspiring for political power, as many had presumed. In order to become a Messiah of peace Jesus had to suffer and sacrifice his own life.

On Palm Sunday the donkey plays a very privileged role by being a means of transport for the king of kings. In fact, donkeys are most frequently mentioned animals in the Bible. We find most of the Old Testament's great historical events include donkeys in the backdrop plodding along.

Abraham got up early in the morning to saddle his donkey, a small act, yet one of obedience to the Lord in order to offer Isaac up to God (Genesis 22:3).

Jacob sent twenty female donkeys and ten donkey foals as a portion of his large and costly gift to appease his brother Esau (Genesis 32:5).

The sons of Jacob traveled to Egypt with donkeys to purchase grain during a great famine (Genesis 42:26).

Moses, in his return to Egypt to be Lord's representative to cause Pharaoh to release the Israelites from slavery, placed his wife and children on a donkey to cross the desert (Exodus 4:20).

The most unforgettable Bible donkey event was when the Lord Jesus Christ rode a donkey colt through the city of Jerusalem. This donkey ride had been prophesied for hundreds of years before the actual event. *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass"* (Zechariah 9:9).

In Indian marriage customs even the millionaire groom rides a mare and with procession of drums and dancing enters the bride's house. The groom may come from a distant town by planes or bus or cars but, before entering the bride's house from about a mile or two he rides a mare not a horse or stallion. On Palm Sunday we see another groom Jesus Christ entering Jerusalem to wed his bride, the church, through his suffering and death.

Dear brothers and sisters, today we remember the triumphant entry of Jesus in the city of Jerusalem riding a donkey as Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. As Jesus entered into Jerusalem the crowds greeted him with shouts of joy and proclaimed him as the messianic king. They spread their cloaks on the ground and placed the palm branches on the street and shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord".

In the second part of today's liturgy, we see a sudden dramatic twist in the story. The crowd, which was shouting Hosanna now shouts crucify him, crucify him. Jesus gets unjustly condemned to death by Pilot. The Pharisees and the people mocked him, jeered him, made fun of him. Finally, at Calvary as he is crucified and left to go through an excruciating slow death. But as he was dying, Jesus had just one thing to say, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" and he promised eternal life to the repentant thief.

On this day let us examine ourselves and see if we are just like the people of Jerusalem who shouted hosanna at one time and then after few hours later the same people shouted crucify him, crucify him. May be just like the people of Jerusalem we shout Hosanna on Sunday and shout crucify him during the weekdays?

Are we also willing to be like the humble donkey to carry Jesus, bringing his universal love, unconditional forgiveness and sacrificial service to our families, places of work and communities and to the world by the way we live our lives? You get many chances to show love and concern of our Lord by various second collection like, Catholic Relief Services for Hunger and development, Diocesan Mission Collection or through me you can help directly some needy people in my home diocese when I go home by the end of April. Please contact the office for details.