

Palm Sunday Input (Sheryl)

4-5-2020

Miguel's First Rider

Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village facing you and you will immediately find a tethered donkey and colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, "The Master needs them and will send them back directly." – Matthew 21: 1 (b) -3 [Jerusalem Bible]

A young donkey named Miguel was tied, alongside his mother, to a tree near his owner's farmhouse. Suddenly, two of Jesus' disciples came up and started untying their ropes. "Momma," Miguel brayed, "what are they doing?"

The disciples didn't understand him, of course, but some hired workers asked them the same question. James, one of the disciples, said: "The Master has need of them and will return them directly."

"Momma," Miguel asked as they traveled to Jesus, "do you know anything about this 'Master' person?"

Evangeline, Miguel's mother, answered: "Son, most people like to think they are masters of animals, but they are often cruel or neglect us. The man we will see is Jesus and He is a master, not only of animals but also for people. He has never been cruel, and He knows how to love."

Miguel was curious. "How do you know about Him?" he asked.

“When I was young, I carried his mother all the way to Bethlehem and saw him born in a feed box. Later I carried them all the way to Egypt when a king feared Jesus and tried to kill the whole family. I returned to Nazareth with them, but Mary had to sell me when her husband Joseph died. Now, you are my son and have grown old enough to carry Jesus yourself.”

This frightened Miguel. He brayed, “I’m strong but no one has ever ridden me. What if I get nervous and trip or buck him off?”

Evangeline just smiled and told her son to wait till he met Jesus.

Sure enough, after the disciples got to Jesus, He came over to see the donkeys. Once his human friends went in the house, Jesus smiled broadly and said, “It’s good to see you again, Evangeline. You kissed me with your velvety nose when I was a baby. You have grown older but are still beautiful. This must be your youngest son.”

“Yes, his name is Miguel,” Evangeline brayed softly.

Jesus looked at Miguel and said: “Hello, Miguel. I will ride you into shouting crowds today. They will throw their coats on the ground right in front of your eyes and hooves. They will wave palm branches about and look and sound like an attacking army of crazy folk! I’ll depend on you to take me safely into the city.”

Miguel was astonished, “You can understand us?”

“Yes, but even my disciples would have a hard time believing it. They have so much to try to believe right now. We’ll let this be our little secret.”

Once Jesus got on Miguel, the little colt felt safe. Miguel knew that, with Jesus, he would be safe even if he were to walk through fire, earthquakes, or into the end of the world itself. He didn’t trip or buck even though no one had ridden him before. He took Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, where he saw Jesus weep in front of the Temple.

When Jesus got off Miguel’s back, a person nearby said: “Look! Doesn’t that colt have an odd marking on its back?”

Donkeys had been one solid color up to this point. Now, there was a dark mane across his shoulders and down his spine. From this time on, all donkeys would bear that mark, which looked like a cross. Later, when Jesus died on a wooden cross, Miguel knew his coloring was there to remind people of what Jesus did for them. Miguel asked his mother why this had to happen.

“He was born to die,” Evangeline answered. “I don’t know why He was born in a stable and killed in a junk yard. Most kings use their power for their own wealth, power, and glory; yet, Jesus gave up everything for love: to teach and heal.”

“I wish that I could do something for Him.”

“We do what we can,” Evangeline answered. “You have carried Him well. We bear our burdens with courage, patience, and joy as best we can. And there is something else about this reminder He left on our backs.”

Looking toward Jerusalem, Miguel asked, “What is it?”

Evangeline’s donkey face smiled gently, a miracle no human ever saw. She looked up into the dusk as heaven’s lights began to appear in the night. She sighed.

“When you think about it, Miguel,” she said, “A Cross looks a lot like a star.”