

The first Palm Sunday excited the people of Israel. For four thousand years their ancestors had longed for a Messiah to come. Now many had come to believe that Jesus was the one, and on this day, he was entering into the holy city, Jerusalem, to begin his reign as king.

In Mark's Gospel, this is the first and only time Jesus enters into Jerusalem. He spends a week there, the most dramatic week of his life. When we read the Gospel, we share the excitement of his entry.

However, when he enters, he enters in a way that must have perplexed people, if not disappointed them. For four thousand years people had waited for Messiah to pass through the gates of the holy city. They imagined he would come with power, strength, and a blaze of glory. But he did not. Instead, he came on a donkey. He came like a bridegroom wearing sweatpants for his wedding. He was not what they were expecting. Perhaps he disappointed people; perhaps they doubted; perhaps they gave in too early when Pilate condemned him to death.

Still, over the years, our expectations of Jesus remain high. In our youth we dream about the kind of life we will live. We dream of the ideal spouse, the ideal family, and the ideal career; a parish dreams of the ideal pastor, and catechumens dream of the ideal Church. Our expectations of Jesus are high, and when reality enters the gate, it often disappoints.

Jesus still enters our lives riding a donkey instead of a cloud. He enters our lives not to give wealth to our poverty, not to give power to our weakness, but to embrace our weakness and redeem what is lost. In spite of our emptiness he gives us life.

At every Mass we sing the song of Palm Sunday, Hosanna in the Highest, because every day Jesus rides his donkey. We may sing in disappointment that he's come to us this way, but we sing with joy that he comes to us at all, and we sing with hope that he'll come to us again.