

## Reading for the Feast of St Mark, the Evangelist

25<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### 1st Reading: 1 Peter 5:5-14

*Peter's homily includes mention of Mark among the Christians in Rome ("Babylon")*

When the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

### Responsorial: from Psalm 89

*R./: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord*

The favours of the Lord I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, My kindness is established forever;  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. (R./)

The heavens proclaim your wonders, O Lord,  
and your faithfulness, in the assembly of the holy ones.  
For who in the skies can rank with the Lord?  
Who is like the Lord among the sons of God? (R./)

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;  
in the light of your countenance, O Lord, they walk.  
At your name they rejoice all the day,  
and through your justice they are exalted. (R./)

### Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

*Jesus' final guidance, from the appendix to Mark's Gospel*

And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will

“speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.

### **Short reflection on the reading for today**

Today we celebrate the Evangelist Mark who wrote the earliest of our four gospels. An early church writer (Papias) describes Mark as assistant to St. Peter in Rome and his help probably included translating Peter's Aramaic sermons so that the Roman Christians could understand him. According to Papias, after Peter's death, at the request of the Christians in Rome Mark wrote what he knew of Peter's memories of Jesus. His Gospel reflects the plain, blunt speaking style of the Galilean fisherman and captures their sense of awe and wonder at the healing power of Christ. Today's *Responsorial*: and the *refrain* ("Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord") are ideal for celebrating this evangelist, who so announced the goodness of Jesus. Mark's gift to the Church was to describe the works and miracles of Jesus, the humble *Son of Man, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for all*. Our response to Mark is not only to listen to his message and meditate on it, but also to live its ideal of humble service in our life and practice. In this way we ourselves become evangelists.

Mark the Gospel-writer may reasonably be identified with the "John Mark" mentioned in Acts 12-15, a Jew from Jerusalem, whose mother Mary let her house be used as the meeting place for the little group of Christians where Peter came on his release from prison (Acts 12:12). He was still a youth at the time of Our Lord's death, and may even have been the young man in the garden of Gethsemane on the night Jesus was arrested and who fled away leaving behind his linen cloth or nightshirt.

During the next few years young John Mark witnessed the growth of the Church from his mother's Upper Room into a much larger and more diversified group. Committing himself to the spread of the faith, Mark accompanied his cousin Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey. But he was unready for the dangers of this work and left them at Perge to return to Jerusalem. While preparing for a later missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark along once more, but Paul objected so strongly that the two cousins went off together on mission. Time healed the rift between Paul, Barnabas and Mark, and during Paul's Roman captivity (ad. 61-63), Mark did him some service (Philem. 24). Later when the Apostle was in a more severe imprisonment he asked Mark to come to visit him (2 Tim. 4:11).

A reliable early tradition identifies Mark as assistant in Rome to St Peter, whom he had known years before, back in Jerusalem. If he was Peter's companion and interpreter (into Greek and/or Latin, both of which were spoken in Rome at that time) it would explain why various incidents involving Peter are described with such detail by Mark, who also includes the rebuff Peter received when Jesus said to him, "Get behind me, you Satan; you are a stumbling-block to me." This echoes Peter's humble acceptance of his own weakness and is a far cry from the ringing endorsement of his authority in Matthew's famous phrase, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church!"

Nothing is known for certain about Mark's later life. He is said to have died a martyr's death in Alexandria in Egypt, and during the Crusades his relics were transferred from Alexandria to Venice and given a worthy tomb in the form of St. Mark's Cathedral. Whatever about his life after Rome, Mark's Gospel, the shortest of the four, is a *Roman Gospel*, written in Rome and addressed to Gentile, Western Christians. Echoing Peter's words he offers numerous instances of where the disciples failed Jesus because they lacked *faith* plus some memorable examples of outsiders who immediately believed in him (e.g. the leper who begged for a cure 1:40; the Syro-Phoenician woman 7:29; the father of the epileptic boy 9:23; blind Bartimaeus 10:52; the centurion who witnessed Jesus' death 15:39). One can regard Mark as our main source for actual, eyewitness stories about Jesus's healings, since his Gospel recounts mainly Peter's memories, and the other three Gospels are largely a broadening of the Lord's story, all using Mark as their starting-point.

