

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Apr 25th 2017**

Feast of Saint Mark, evangelist

Today, the Church remembers Mark, the Gospel writer. The first reading from 1 Peter 5:13 speaks of “Mark, my son,” whom tradition identifies with Mark the evangelist. It is ironic that as we celebrate the feast day of St. Mark, the Gospel passage chosen for today is taken from the “longer ending” (vv. 19-20) which many believe that he did not write. Most scholars hold that Mark’s Gospel originally ended at verse 8 or that the original ending after verse 8 has been lost.

Whoever wrote the “longer ending” of Mark’s Gospel has borrowed inspiring pieces from other Gospels: Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene; Jesus appears to two others while they walk in the country; Jesus commissions the Eleven; and Jesus’ ascension. I am not a Scripture scholar, and when you’re bald like me, you look mighty foolish scratching your head when deliberating longer and shorter endings of a Gospel. So, let’s go ahead and draw fruit from today’s Gospel passage as it stands.

In our Gospel reading today, Jesus missions his friends: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” And they did that. They went to lands far and near and shared the Good News with people rich and poor, thin and fat, fair and dark skinned. For over two millennia, good people — in the kitchen, at home, in the fields, at the office, in schools, in factories, or in other workplaces — have spread Jesus’ message and not always used words. They have “clothed themselves with humility” as the first reading recommends. Their actions and attitudes have shown that they love because they have experienced great love in their personal lives.

Some missionaries have probably been inspired by this Gospel passage as Christ’s command to baptize others. I come from a pluralistic society (India) where I have experienced goodness and kindness from Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. Many of them are more Christ-like in their words and actions than I am. Should they be converted, or is it I who needs conversion? Rather than worry about “baptizing” people of other faiths, I would rather focus on these words that end Mark’s Gospel: “The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.”

Would you join me in a short prayer? “Lord, on this feast of St. Mark the Evangelist, do work in us and through us so that our lives become Good News to those we encounter today.”

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