

# Homily For Tuesday of the Third Week of Easter - Year I

## St Peter's 8:30am Mass - April 25, 2023

(Feast of St. Mark, Evangelist)

**1 Peter 5:5-14** "Beloved, you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another."

**Psalm 89:1-16** "I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever to all generations. "

**Mark 16:16-20** "The eleven went and proclaimed the good news, while the Lord confirmed the signs."

### Saved By Jesus

#### Introduction

A boxer was getting hit pretty hard. At one point he went down to the canvas. At that point the referee began what is called a mandatory eight count. He starts the fight again only after counting slowly to eight, which gives him time to assess whether the fighter is capable of continuing safely. In some cases, it also means the bell will sound, signalling the end of the round, giving the boxer even more time to recover. That's why we have the expression "saved by the bell." Well, this fighter was struggling to get up, so his trainer ran over near where he was on the mat and yelled at him: "Stay down. Don't get up until eight. To which the boxer looked over, through blurry eyes asked: "Okay, what time is it now?" That boxer was done. An eight count wasn't going to save him.

This feast of St. Mark, the Gospel writer, interrupts the flow of the Book of Acts at a particular point. Yesterday's first reading tells of the growing hatred for Stephen's preaching and wonders and signs. Tomorrow, we will hear of the persecution that began after Stephen's death by stoning. I find it interesting that today, because of the way the calendar works out this year, if it was not for the feast day of an Apostle, we would have heard the details of Stephen's martyrdom. Of course, we know it did happen. We are saved from hearing of its brutality but, of course, it did happen. Stephen bears the full brunt of human hatred, in almost the exact same pattern as our Lord himself. He is definitely not saved by the bell.

## **Saint Mark**

Instead, we have an excerpt from Peter's first letter to the churches. We also have a passage from Mark's Gospel. The two of them are very closely connected in the story of salvation. St. Mark was born to Jewish parents living in Libya in North Africa, later settling in Cana of Galilee. Mark became one of the 70 disciples of Jesus. According to tradition, St. Peter the Apostle was married to a relative of St. Mark's father, and after Mark's father died, Peter looked after him like his own son. In his letter, Peter refers to Mark as his son, reflecting this relationship, but also as a spiritual son, in Christ.

Mark had been an associate of St. Paul. They had a falling out but were later reconciled. In the meanwhile, Mark spent a lot of time with Peter. He knew Latin and so was able to help Peter proclaim the Gospel to the Roman world. We might wonder why we don't have a Gospel of Peter. What we have is Peter's teaching as the basis for Mark's Gospel. Later, Mark was also said to be the founder of the church of Alexandria, a major centre of Christianity for centuries. That is where he was martyred around by being dragged through the streets of Alexandria until his body was torn to pieces.

Mark's Gospel is addressed to Gentile converts to the Christian faith living in Rome. Peter's letter refers to the church in Babylon. That's code for Rome. Rome is where both Peter and Paul had been executed. Mark writes his gospel to encourage the Christians to get up when they are knocked down. In so doing, they join themselves to the saviour.

## **Peter**

Mark would have read Peter's letter. He would have taken to heart the advice of his spiritual father, in the beautiful metaphors we have today: "Clothe yourself in humility." I have found that most of the things I have to work on are based in pride. Humility needs to be seen on me as obviously as the clothes I wear.

Then he says, "cast your anxiety on Jesus." If you want to live the salvation which he offers, you must trust in him, with the understanding that you cannot save yourself from anxiety. The world is full of reasons for anxiety today. Everything

going on seeks to make us afraid. But our Lord took all of that on himself. His anxiety was so great that he sweated blood in the garden. But he gave it all to the Father in heaven. Mark tells us that he said, "Abba (daddy), for you all things are possible. Remove this cup from me." In that calling out to God, he was given the strength to get up and be able to carry the burden of sin that is ours. He was able to take on the worst blows. And when he was down for the count, he got up from the grave.

Then there is the warning about the devil, who is prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Peter calls the devil, "the adversary." He it is who is desperate to make sure no one is saved, that no one will have time or resources to recover from the beatings administered by the world. Contrary to the adversary, Jesus sent the Advocate, the Spirit which would defend us from the lies of the devil.

### **Call To Conversion**

Mark declares Jesus' command: Go and proclaim the good news to creation. It is belief and baptism by which they will be saved. Those who do not believe have rejected the one who saves. This is hard because we know so many people who seem to be in that state.

Why do Christians often keep a hesitant silence regarding what we believe in. Perhaps we are afraid of being knocked down, unable to get up. However, on the Feast of St. Mark, while listening to the Gospel of the evangelist Mark, we cannot but proclaim assuredly and gratefully where the source is and where the strength of our word lies.

"Just as the sun, the creature of God, is one and the same throughout the world, so the preaching of the truth shines everywhere and illuminates all those who want to come to the knowledge of the truth." (Saint Irenaeus of Lyon)

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature, alleluia.*

**Collect:** *O God, who raised up St Mark and endowed him with the grace to preach the Gospel, grant that we may so profit from his teaching as to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Christ.*

**1 Peter:** *Beloved, all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, 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. 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. Your sister church sends you greetings and so does my son Mark. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.*

**Psalm:** *I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever, to all generations. Happy are the people who walk in the light of your countenance.*

**Mark:** *After rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to the eleven and said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned. By using my name they will cast out demons, speak in new tongues, 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 was taken up into heaven. And the eleven went out and proclaimed the good news while the Lord confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.*