

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Apr 25th 2024

Proclaiming the Gospel means living like Christ

According to Saint Jerome, the Gospel of Mark presented Jesus Christ as King, giving him the biblical image of a Lion. Today the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Mark. He wrote the Gospel as a catechesis on Faith for the catechumens in Rome. It is also called Saint Peter's Gospel because while writing the Gospel, he was with Peter in Rome, listening to his preaching.

Mark is the only evangelist who titles his work "The Gospel" or the Good News (Mark 1:1). When he narrates the scene of Jesus being captured on the night of the Passion, he talks about a youth who followed Jesus, and when the guards tried to arrest him, he fled naked. The Scripture scholars today suggest that it could be the personal experience of Mark - that he was that youth. That youth remained fascinated by Peter, the first Pope of the Church.

Acts of the Apostles presented Mark as a companion of Paul in his missionary journey, and later he comes to Rome as a companion of Peter.

And in today's Gospel, Mark speaks of the sending forth by the Lord. "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." This is the missionary nature of faith. Pope Francis says, Our faith in Jesus is to be proclaimed, and if I am not a missionary, there is no faith. And If anyone says my Faith is sufficient for me to be saved, this is a gnostic heresy. Faith always leads you to go out and transmit it through witnessing: "Go out to the people; let people see how you live." Indeed, strong words from the Pope!

Explaining the mission command of Jesus to "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature," Pope Francis says that this verse is often mistaken for asking people to change their religion and get baptised, "as if I were recruiting for a football team or a charity. Preaching the Gospel does not mean proselytising. On the other hand, this is a challenge for me to live like Christ. If I say that I am a Christian but live like a pagan, that doesn't convince anyone.

The Pope narrated the story of a university student in Poland, who asked him: "I have many fellow students who are atheists. What do I have to tell them to convince them?" The Pope replied, "Nothing! The last thing you have to do is say something. Start to live, and they will see your witness, and they will ask you, 'But why do you live like this?'" Faith must be transmitted not by words but by our life example. May St. Mark intercede for us so that we live like Christ.