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April 25: Saint Mark the Evangelist

Gospel for April 25th, feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 16:15-20)

And Jesus said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, 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 forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen.

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Commentary

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Saint Mark, one of the four evangelists, who was very close to the apostle Peter. The Gospel of Mark was the first to be written down. With a simple and direct style he recounts our Lord's life for us. According to Tradition, Saint Mark was the first bishop of the Church at

Alexandria. There he left an indelible mark of his love for Christ.

In today's Gospel passage Jesus gathers the disciples around him and gives them a final command: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." Then He blesses them and says farewell.

The mandate to preach the Gospel is seen by the disciples as a great gift from God. "Faith always leads one to get out of oneself. To go out. The faith needs to be transmitted, to be offered, especially by the testimony of one's life: "Go, so that people may see how you live."^[1]

The disciples, filled with joy, return to the Holy City and from there begin to preach the good news throughout the whole world. Jesus is their intimate friend; they know He is always with them and is faithful to his promises. They have learned to trust Him. They don't put their trust

in themselves, nor in their own strength and abilities.

Our Lord at the Ascension is not saying “goodbye,” or “until we meet later,” but paradoxically “I’m staying with you.” They trust in Christ’s promise: “I am with you always until the end of the world” (cf. *Mt 28:20*). They never doubt his continued presence in them, and, in a central way, in the Eucharist.

Their joy spurs them to set out to spread God’s Love to the farthest corner of the world. God was entrusting all mankind to the disciples, which filled them with even greater joy. Their faces reflected the glory of the Lord, showing others Christ’s love for them. That is how Saint Mark transmitted the faith to those around him.

“Faith is making revelation visible, so that the Holy Spirit can act in people through the testimony of our service.

Service is a way of life: if I say I am a Christian and live like a pagan, it is useless! It doesn't convince anyone. If I say that I am a Christian and show it with deeds, that attracts others. It is giving witness.”^[2] —

God has also chosen us and entrusted to us all men and women: our parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends, co-workers, all humanity.

The apostolate is a natural consequence of the joy of being with Jesus. As Saint Josemaría said: “Apostolate is love for God that overflows and communicates itself to others. The interior life implies a growth in union with Christ, in the Bread and in the Word. And apostolate is the precise and necessary outward manifestation of interior life. When one tastes the love of God, one feels burdened with the weight of souls.”^[3] —

People need us. They need our joy so that, through it, they can discover Jesus in their own lives. In our daily work, in our clean look, in our conversations filled with understanding, in our eagerness to serve, understand, encourage and forgive others, the Risen Christ is present, filling everything with his joy. This world of ours, not so different from the world of the men and women who accompanied our Lord, needs Christians whose faces shine with God's love.

^[1] Pope Francis. Homily, 25 April 2020.

^[2] Ibid.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, "The Ascension of our Lord," in *Christ is Passing By*, no. 122.

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