

April 25

St. Mark the Evangelist

Biblical Figure

Mark was not a direct follower of Jesus but was instead a disciple of St. Peter. Peter affectionately referred to Mark as his son when he sent greetings by letter to the churches. Peter told Mark all about Jesus, and Mark wrote down what Peter told him. Like all the authors of Scripture, Mark wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His Gospel is one of the four Gospels about Jesus's life in the Bible. The Gospel of Mark is the first and shortest Gospel. You will often hear the priest read from the Gospel of Mark during Mass.

While Mark might not have been a disciple when Jesus was alive, he did know about Jesus. There was a young man who followed Jesus when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Scripture describes him in this way: "Now a young man followed [Jesus] wearing nothing but a linen cloth about his body. They seized him, but he left the cloth behind and ran off naked" (Mark 14:51–52). This young man only appears in Mark's Gospel, and many believe that this was Mark himself!

Mark's mother was also an important leader in the early Christian community in Jerusalem. There was a time when Herod arrested Peter for preaching about Jesus. An angel rescued Peter, casting off his chains and leading him past the guards. The first place Peter went when he was freed was to the house of Mark's mother, where Christians were gathered in prayer.

Mark was also the cousin of St. Barnabas, a fellow traveler with St. Paul. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their apostolic travels to preach about Jesus.

When Paul wanted to go to Asia Minor, Mark returned to Jerusalem. No one knows why. Maybe Mark found the journey too hard. Maybe he was homesick! Whatever the reason, Mark's decision upset Paul. Later, Mark wanted to travel with them again. But Paul refused to take Mark with him! So Paul and Barnabas parted ways. Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus to preach about Jesus there. However, Paul and Mark's friendship in Christ was stronger than any quarrel. Mark was in Rome when Paul was in prison for preaching the Gospel. Paul was lonely in prison and wrote to his student Timothy about Mark: "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is helpful to me in the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

Later, Mark became the bishop of Alexandria in Egypt. Church tradition says that he was martyred and buried there. St. Mark's symbol is the lion. You often see him in artwork pictured with the other Evangelists; he is always the one with the lion next to him. St. Mark, help me to pay attention to the readings at Mass!



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