

April 25

ON SAINT MARK

116.1 First Point

Saint Mark was a disciple of Saint Peter and accompanied him in his travels and in the preaching of the holy Gospel. He was so faithful to Saint Peter and so beloved by him that this saint joins Mark's name to his own in the greetings he addresses in his first Epistle. He calls him his son,⁶⁰⁸ as having begotten him in Jesus Christ,⁶⁰⁹ and having brought him up in the faith and in the practice of Christianity.

How fortunate this saint was to be instructed by so well-qualified a teacher. How clearly did his conduct show how much he profited by such an advantage, for he always remained an exact observer of the doctrine of this holy apostle, which was none other than that of Jesus Christ.

You can have the advantage of being instructed by the same teacher as Saint Mark if you often read the Epistles of Saint Peter and if you faithfully put into practice the holy maxims contained there, which are so consoling and so instructive.

116.2 Second Point

Saint Mark wrote his Gospel while living in Rome. He was urgently requested to do so by those who had been converted by Saint Peter, because they desired to have in writing what this holy apostle had taught them by word of mouth. When Saint Peter had read the Gospel, he approved it and ordered it to be read in the public assemblies that were held in the Church; this was productive of much good.

Since you are bound to teach every day the doctrine of the holy apostles and of Jesus Christ himself, you are obliged to learn it well so that you possess it perfectly and by this means make your students true disciples of Jesus Christ. Are you careful to learn thoroughly the holy maxims contained in this saint's Gospel and to meditate on them often, so that you may be able to inspire them in those for whom you are responsible? Your first care for them should be to make sure they grasp fully the doctrine of the holy apostles, to give them the spirit of religion, and to make them practice what Jesus Christ has left us in the holy Gospel.

116.3 Third Point

Saint Mark, having been formed by Saint Peter in the apostolic ministry and having written his Gospel based on what he had learned from this holy apostle, was sent by him to preach in Egypt. Because he joined example to his words, and because his behavior was most exemplary, in a very short time a great number of persons, after hearing and observing him, inspired by his holy life, embraced the Christian religion.

He led them to such great perfection that they imitated the first Christians in Jerusalem, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. They gave up their properties, put everything they had in common to be distributed to each one according to his needs,⁶¹⁰ they had but one heart and one soul,⁶¹¹ they gathered every day to pray in one spirit and to receive the Body of Jesus Christ, and they encouraged one another in the practice of good.⁶¹² Their conduct even proved a subject of admiration for the infidels and pagans.

This should be the model of our perfection. Would we want to have less perfection than these first Christians, who lived in the world with much greater detachment and perfection than many religious who live in seclusion and are obliged by their profession to renounce the world?

Mark, also called John Mark in the Acts of the Apostles, was a cousin of Saint Barnabas and the son of the Mary in whose home the Christians gathered, and to which Saint Peter went when he had been rescued from jail by the angel (Acts 12:12-17). Mark was a companion to Saint Paul on the latter's first missionary journey, but refused to go with him when they started to travel north. Paul would not take him on his second journey, but he subsequently was with Paul in Rome. Mark was also in Rome with Saint Peter and probably wrote his Gospel there as the interpreter of Peter, according to early tradition. It is also a tradition that Mark was the founder of the church in Alexandria and that he was martyred there during the persecution of Trajan. Yet another tradition has it that his body was brought to Venice in the ninth century and is buried there under the high altar of the church dedicated to him.

608 1 Pt 5:13
609 1 Cor 4:15
610 Acts 2:44-45
611 Acts 4:32
612 Acts 2:42