

St. Mark the Evangelist

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[0 : 00] O Almighty God, who has instructed Thy Holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of Thy Evangelist, St. Mark, words from this morning's Colossians, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Who was St. Mark? I like to think of him as the comeback kid. Who was St. Mark?

Sacred Scripture and the preponderance of sacred tradition teach he was born John Mark in Cyrene around 5 AD. His parents, Aristopoulos and Mary, were of the Jewish families transplanted in Cyrene by the Macedonian emperor Ptolemy I.

Mark also is often identified as a cousin of St. Barnabas. As a boy, Mark's family moved to Cana in Galilee, where he was raised in a faithful Jewish home.

During the years of Jesus' ministry, Mark's mother became a disciple of Jesus. Acts 12.12 states, St. Mark's mother, who was a disciple of Jesus. Mark's mother, who was a disciple of Jesus. Mark's mother, who was a disciple of Jesus.

[1 : 14] Mark's mother, who was a disciple of Jesus. Mark's mother, who was a disciple of Jesus. St. Peter knew to go there after his miraculous release from prison. Mark himself was a disciple of Jesus, too.

He would have been in his 20s when Jesus' earthly ministry began. Some believe he was one of the 70 whom Jesus sent out to preach. St. Mark, chapter 14, verses 51 and 52 alludes to Mark being in Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested.

He was likely the young man who had his linen robe torn off him as he ran away from those who came to arrest Jesus. You might say running away was habitual for Mark in his younger days.

In 45 AD, St. Paul and St. Barnabas set off on their first missionary journey, and Mark went with them. Acts 13.13 states that after their first stop in Paphos, where they had faced opposition to the gospel, Mark left and returned to Jerusalem.

Five years later, after the council of Jerusalem, Barnabas wanted Mark to join he and St. Paul again. But St. Paul vehemently objected.

[2 : 33] The disagreement was so strong that Barnabas and Paul split up. Barnabas went and took Mark with him to go work in Cyprus. And St. Paul took St. Silas to retrace his steps to check on the churches that he and Barnabas had planted previously.

St. Paul clearly felt Mark had given away to fear and run away, abandoning he and Barnabas and Paphos. He wasn't going to take the chance of it happening again.

That could have been the end of St. Mark's work for Christ. Having been shunned by St. Paul, Mark could have stayed in Jerusalem or in Cyprus where he had family and just gone on with his life.

But he didn't. After working with St. Barnabas for a time, Mark assisted in the evangelical work of St. Peter. He was Peter's interpreter.

By 61 AD, when St. Paul was in prison for the first time, he commended Mark to the Colossians. In Colossians 4.11, St. Paul included Mark as being one of his fellow workers unto the kingdom of God.

[3 : 52] When St. Paul was in prison in Rome the second time, as he approached the end of his life, he asked for Mark to come to him. In 2 Timothy 4.11, he pleads with St. Timothy, Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

St. Mark's comeback was complete. Mark continued to minister to St. Peter until Peter's martyrdom in Rome in 66 AD. The gospel St. Mark wrote was based on the teachings of St. Peter.

It's the briefest of the gospels written primarily to Christians in Rome who were enduring extreme persecution under the Emperor Nero. St. Mark was there, enduring that persecution with them.

But St. Mark was not done with his work for Christ and the gospel. Despite St. Paul's and St. Peter's martyrdom, he did not run away.

Sacred tradition tells us that in the years between his work with St. Barnabas and his work with St. Peter, he had founded the church in Alexandria, Egypt. After Peter's death, he returned to Alexandria, where he himself met a martyr's death in 68 AD, when pagan opposition tied a rope around his neck and dragged him through the city until he died.

[5 : 28] Like his mentor, St. Paul, Mark had fought a good fight. He had finished his course. He had kept the faith.

Throughout our lives, it is likely God has given you and I any number of opportunities to minister by sharing the gospel and serving others.

It may be within our families, with our siblings, our parents, or other relatives. It may be within our workplace with co-workers or even our boss.

It may be in the social groups or in the social circles that we are in. It may be within our family.

Chances are, though, we have not. Chances are we fail to open our mouths and open our lives to others.

[6 : 54] We've had the opportunity to bring Christ to them and them to Christ. Maybe we have become afraid of the potential or the real pushback we might get and have run away.

If you have, guess what? We have another chance. Just like St. Mark had another chance.

We have failed an opportunity to share the gospel with someone. Even if we've run away, we can pick ourselves up and get back at it.

I've experienced this personally. Several years ago, I had a colossal failure in my priestly ministry and thought God was going to leave me on the ecclesiastical bench for a long time.

Maybe for good. But he didn't. He said to my spirit, shake off your failure. Grab your Ephesians 6 armor and get back into the fight.

[8 : 00] I need warriors. If you sensed, you've let an opportunity slip. If you've run away from the battle, if you feel a sense of failure, don't let these stop you from reentering the war for souls.

Pick up your armor. Warriors are needed. Pray for and receive God's forgiveness. Utilize the sacrament of penance.

It was invaluable to me when I was making my way back. Get sound priestly counsel. Be in the word daily. Receive the Eucharist as often as possible.

Ask God for a new mission. And when he sends you, re-engage boldly. Filled with faith. And fearlessly do what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

My brothers and sisters, as the life of St. Mark teaches us, the only real failure we can have in Christ is giving up. We are facing challenging times for the church.

[9 : 16] Challenges not unlike the early church faced. God wants you and I engaged in the battle. Let us not allow past failures to prevent us from being faithful today.

Like St. Mark, we can all be comeback kids. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.