

Lectio Divina (Mark 1:1-4)

The Beginning of the Good News

Lectio: What the Word says in itself

The beginning of Mark's Gospel announces that here is the beginning of the Gospel – at first glance a somewhat redundant statement! But there are various possible layers to this announcement.

It may be that Mark wanted to indicate that, though there were earlier prophecies regarding how Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit, as opposed to John, who baptised with water, such prophecies were not the absolute beginning of the story.

In much the same way as people sometimes use the phrase, '... But that was only the beginning of it...', Mark's opening sentence hints strongly that this was only 'the tip of the iceberg.' This would be consistent with what Mark writes later on in the Gospel, about the suffering of the Son of God. If this is only the beginning, then there's a lot more to be said, and the Good News is not merely a list of the positive experiences of Jesus.

As we read Mark's Gospel, we come to see that it is only as a result of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that we receive and participate in the Good News of salvation.

Meditatio: What the Word says to me/us

Mark's reference to Isaiah's invitation, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him,' suggests a call to action, not only for John the Baptist, who is entrusted from the start of his mission with paving the way for Jesus, but also for Jesus' faithful group of followers, of whom we are members. This requires careful consideration as to how best to prepare the way. Is it through proclamations? The erection of sites of worship? Or is it through turning away from what distracts from his arrival into our lives? In making straight the paths for him, do all the bends in the metaphorical road have to be eliminated, so that the direct route to Jesus is visible and accessible? Perhaps there is room to consider all of these aspects, to varying extents, as part of the Gospel's mandate. However, the most challenging element is the inner, personal one, which calls us to 'straighten out' our own selves, our

thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and actions, so that we can walk with and for Jesus, in the actualisation of His mission.

Oratio: What the Word leads me/us to say

Lord, you are the Beginning.
You are the Good News.

You are the joy behind the story, and the energy that inspires us to continue in your direction, despite the bends in the road which may distract and overwhelm us from time to time.

May we, by our example, bring others along the path of life to you, so that they, too, may share in the Good News and understand that your yoke is easy and your burden light, and that through following you, their voices in the wilderness will be heard by all those who are ready to listen.

Contemplatio: Being transformed by the Word

Beginning to contemplate how we might introduce the Good News to those we meet, both in our personal and professional lives, would be a good starting point for considering how this opening passage from the Gospel of Mark calls us to action. Trans-form-ation, in its essence, entails taking on a new form. What form will this be? How form-ative will the experience be for those with whom we share the Good News? The only way to engage in this reflective process is to be still and know that He is God ... (Ps 46:10).

Actio: Putting the Word into practice

The call in Mark's introduction to his



Portrait of St Mark, from an illustrated Armenian manuscript of the four Gospels

Gospel is clear. It is incumbent on us, his followers, to put into practice what we know is consistent with the message of the Gospel. This can be done by preaching the Good News, but also, and perhaps more importantly, by making the path towards God the Father less cluttered with obstacles, by clearing it in faithful anticipation of all that the clearing will reveal.

May we and those people we meet on the journey be more than solitary voices in the wilderness; may we be a collective choir of proclaimers of the Good News of Jesus. In this way, we can experience for ourselves 'the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ the Son of God.'



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