

Sunday, May 7, 2011

Saint Mark the Ecumenical Evangelist

Today, we celebrate the commemoration of our great evangelist St Mark to whom we owe our knowledge of Christ, and we are honored that we are his sons in the faith.

+ St. Mark had unique and wonderful attributes to his personality. In this article, I would like to stop at one of his most distinct characters, which is his **Ecumenical spirit**. He was neither limited to serving a certain country nor to communicating to a particular culture, but rather he was remarkably open minded and envisioned the world as one vast field where he wanted to sow the seeds of the kingdom in every part of it. He was convinced that all mankind is invited to enjoy the salvation founded in believing in Christ and the membership in His kingdom through baptism. He also was convinced that when God opens new horizons for him to evangelize anywhere, He is essentially inviting him to evangelize with no boundaries, and that He (God) is also committed to bless his ministry and his labor, and He is responsible for growing the seeds that his servant sows in every place.

+ St. Mark served in all the continents of the ancient world, Asia, Africa and Europe, and history mentions several countries where he preached the salvation of Christ, from Lebanon

Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor, to Genoa, L'Aquila, Venice and Rome in Italy, in addition to Egypt and Kairouan in Africa. He is indeed an **ecumenical evangelist**, serving all the time and anywhere the Lord needs him. He labors everywhere the Lord places him, and wherever He opens a door of evangelism to him, he sows the heavenly seeds, and in love he serves everyone as children of Christ everywhere.

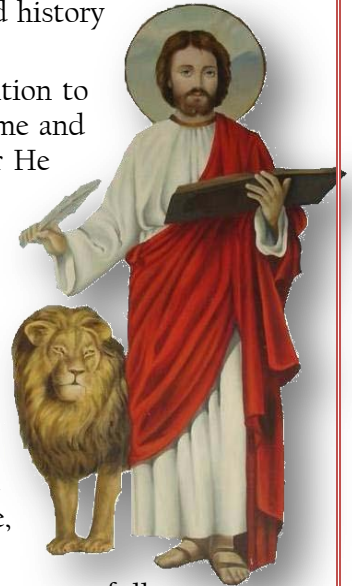
+ It appears to me that St. Mark had the world's map on his mind and sought after the salvation of every soul. Therefore, when he wrote his wonderful and concise Gospel, he was keen to record the words of the Lord Jesus before His ascension: ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”*** (Mark 16:15). And he carried out this commandment in practice, taking into account the difficulty of mobility and transportation at that time. However, he believed that God will bless the little and will never forget the labor of love, so he set out to plant seeds everywhere, trusting that God will bless and increase. Thus, the faithful servant works sincerely without being worrisome, as he is not planting what is for his own, but what is for the Lord of the harvest.

+ St. Mark **had to be very flexible** in order to be attuned to various circumstances and to successfully deal with different types of personalities. What helped him to accomplish that is his broad cultural background and his language skills in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. He established Churches in many countries and he was well-liked in all of them, and these countries are proud that St. Mark was their evangelist and the founder of their Churches.

+ One of the most important secrets that contributed to the success of the service of St. Mark, is that he harnessed the **power the Resurrection within him and that he had profound personal experiences with the work of God with him**. Therefore when the available means to him were so little, or almost non-existent, he believed in the miraculous work of God and His unlimited ability to change the hearts and grow the seeds. This is what was apparent in his **ministry in Egypt**, in which he seemed to have almost no resources. Nonetheless, **through the power of the Resurrection and the New Life which he carried within him, the doors were opened, the Church was established, grew in grace, and the number of the believers was multiplied**. This made Egypt become an entirely Christian nation by the fourth century, and lead the world in theology and asceticism. During this period, many of the Fathers from the East and the West came to visit Egypt to learn from the spirituality of its Fathers and monks who spread in tens of thousands throughout the deserts of Egypt, offering their lives in sincere worship at the altar of the love of Christ who purchased them with His blood.

These great fruits are the result of the living seeds sown by St. Mark in the land of Egypt, seeds full of the power of the Resurrection and the new life, the power of the living word he wrote to us, and the power of the divine altar which was established in the midst of the land of Egypt to offer the divine sacrifice which gives life to the believers in every liturgy.

Accordingly, let the heart of St. Mark rejoice and be glad with all these multiplying fruits. Let's also ask him to continue praying for his Coptic Orthodox Church, in order to always be a beacon of light in the midst of darkness, preserved by grace in the Orthodox faith, and to grow in the love of God and the peace of Christ. Amen.



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