

Sunday 6th December 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

With Advent we begin the Church's New Year. This year the Gospel for most Sundays is from the Gospel of Mark. Today we begin reading Mark with these opening words: "The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God". This line forms a very short but meaningful preface to the first written account of the life of Jesus that has come down to us [most scholars agree that Mark is the first of the Gospels to be written]. The word "Gospel" literally means "good news" and Mark sees the document he has written as a "beginning" of this good news that is going to spread and change the world.

Mark will give us a treasury of events, actions and teachings from the life of Jesus. He will recount the life of Jesus from his baptism by John to his death on the cross. His purpose seems to be to ask/answer two questions:

Who is Jesus?

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

Does Mark's Gospel answer these questions? Yes and No has to be the answer. Mark gives us a wealth of information about Jesus and the life and experience of his first disciples. However the more he tells us the bigger the mystery of Jesus' identity becomes: in other words every episode helps to build our picture of Jesus but at the same time augments the sense of mystery and incomprehension. It is a similar pattern with the lives of his disciples. The disciples in Mark's Gospel seem to be always struggling to understand and to keep following Jesus.

Perhaps a key to help us in our reading of Mark is to keep going back to the opening sentence. Mark sees everything he has written as a beginning. Mark sees his Gospel as a first glimpse into an enormous mystery, the identity of Jesus, and the first dipping of one's toes into the challenge and adventure of discipleship. The more we know about Jesus the more we discover we do not know – even the greatest disciple [saint] is only at the first tentative step of discipleship.

Most Sundays for the next year we will hear an extract from this fascinating document we call the "Gospel of Mark". However I recommend you read the whole gospel of Mark regularly over the next year. It is short and very readable. It

is important to see the episode chosen for a particular Sunday in its context: it forms part of a bigger picture and we need to see that picture. Mark's Gospel is carefully put together from beginning to end – it is written to inform, enlighten, challenge and inspire its readers. Mark's purpose is that his readers become the kind of disciples Jesus wants. If the first disciples struggled then it is ok for us also to struggle – coming face to face with the mystery of Jesus and freely choosing to live the greatest of human challenges is the essence of discipleship. Mark writes to give disciples encouragement and sustenance as they hear and have their lives changed by this Good News.

Fr. Matt Blake OCD

Notices

Welcome back everyone to Mass again after the latest lockdown. It is truly a blessing to see each other.

We remember in our prayers and we greet those unable to return for reasons of health or other reasons. Many of you are joining us by live-stream and are united with us in prayer.

A reminder of our opening times:

Monday to Saturday:	7.45 – 9.00	11.30 – 1.00	4.30 – 6.30	
Sunday:	8.15 – 9.00	9.30 – 11.00	11.30 – 1.00	4.30 – 6.45

We continue to live stream all our masses on our website and YouTube.

Christmas: Many of you have been asking us about Christmas. Next week we will give more detailed plans. We will celebrate Mass at all our usual times and put on extra Masses as necessary. We will do everything we can to facilitate all who wish to attend Christmas Mass.

However we must abide by all the usual restrictions and requirements. It will be a particularly challenging time for our very generous stewards. Many people who come will not be familiar with our system. With the generosity and collaboration of everyone we will make this Christmas very special for all who come to our Church.