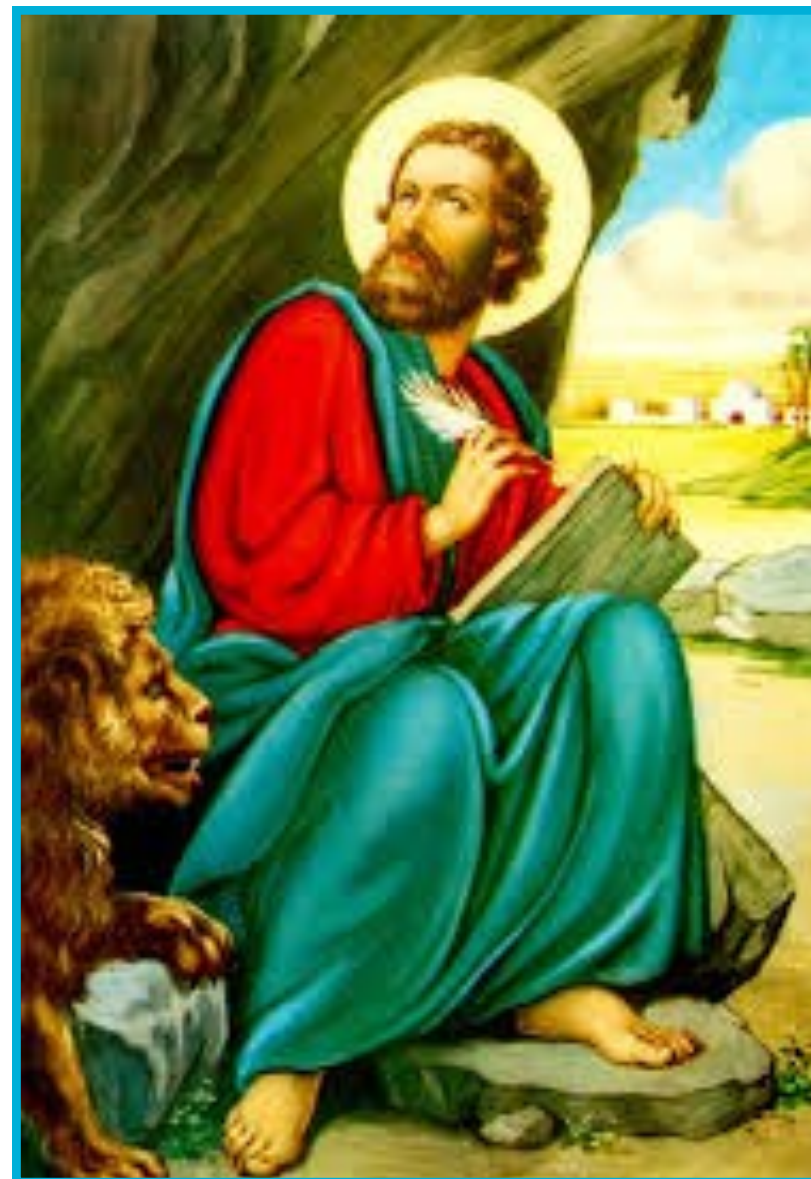




THE GOSPEL OF MARK

CHAPTER 8: 1-39



For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

Mark wrote down Peter's account of the 'good news'. Peter was one of the first twelve of Jesus' disciples, and the first to publicly recognize Him as the Messiah. Peter, through Mark, shows us that Jesus fulfills all the criteria of the Servant-Messiah our Ransom, who was prophesied by Isaiah some 750 years earlier (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:5-7; 52:13-53:12). Jesus is portrayed as a slave, caring for people and serving God (Mark 1:32-35). There are therefore no details of His birth, only of the beginning of His service (Mark 1:1,9).

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapse's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapse's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Mark 8: 1-39

Douay Rheims Version

Christ feeds four thousand. He gives sight to a blind man. He foretells his passion.

1. In those days again, when there was a great multitude, and had nothing to eat; calling his disciples together, he saith to them:
2. I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.
3. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; for some of them came from afar off.
4. And his disciples answered him: From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?
5. And he asked them: How many loaves have ye? Who said: Seven.

strange, alien, or adulterous father. See what has been said on S. Matt. x. 33.

Ver. 39. *The kingdom of God, i.e., the glory of the kingdom of God, which is about to be in My transfiguration.*

Coming, i.e., appearing, and showing itself to Peter, James, and John. In power, i.e., with great power, glory, splendour, and majesty.

he fell down at their feet, and from a traitor became a confessor of the faith. (S. Greg. Nyss. *in Vita*.)

Mystically: The Scholiast in S. Jerome says, "The blind man is a penitent sinner. He sees men as trees walking, because he esteems every one superior to himself. With David he counts himself unworthy to be called a man, deeming himself to be a dead dog and a flea" (2 Sam. xvi.).

Ver. 25. After that again He laid His hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly. Christ wished not suddenly, but by degrees, perfectly to illuminate this blind man: 1st That He might exhibit miracles of every description. 2nd That this miracle might be more esteemed. 3rd And principally, That He might accommodate Himself to the imperfect faith of the blind man and those who brought him, their faith increasing as the miracle proceeded; and that He might the more kindle in them faith, hope, and desire that it might be brought to a perfect work. "In the first place, He cured this blind man imperfectly," says Euthymius, "inasmuch as he believed imperfectly, that he who as yet had but a little vision might by means of the little light believe more perfectly, and be healed more completely; for He was the wise Physician." And by and by he says, "Increase of faith deserved increase of healing."

Tropologically: Christ wished to teach us that the unbeliever and the sinner are gradually illuminated by God, and that they ought correspondingly to make gradual increase in the knowledge and worship of God. "He did it," says Bede, "that He might show the greatness of human blindness, which is wont to arrive step by step, and by certain grades, as it were, of progression, at the light of the Divine knowledge." For as the Scholiast says, "There are degrees of knowledge; neither can any one arrive in a single hour, or, indeed, without considerable time, at perfect knowledge." We have experience of this in children and scholars, who must be taught and instructed step by step. For if the teacher, being impatient of delay and trouble, should wish to teach them everything at once, he would crush their memory and intellect, so that they would take in nothing. It is like wine when it is poured into a vessel with a narrow neck; if you try to pour it all in at once, you pour in scarcely anything, but nearly the whole is spilled. Worthy of note is the Italian proverb, "Gently, gently, if you would go far;" or the saying of the philosopher, "Progression is by degrees."

Symbolically: The Scholiast in S. Jerome says, "Christ laid His hands upon his eyes, that he might see all things clearly, that is, that by visible works he might understand things invisible, and which eye hath not seen; and that after the film of sin he might clearly behold the state of his soul with the eye of a clean heart. For blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Ver. 34. In this adulterous generation, of depraved Jews, who are sons of God, though not genuine ones, but like spurious children, the offspring of adultery. For they are degenerate from the faith of their fathers, the Patriarchs, since they will not receive Me, who am the Messiah promised to them. Therefore they are not so much children of God as of the devil. Such are called in Hebrew *bene nechar*, *i.e.*, children born of a

6. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, he broke, and gave to his disciples for to set before them; and they set them before the people.
7. And they had a few little fishes; and he blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them.
8. And they did eat and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets.
9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand; and he sent them away.
10. And immediately going up into a ship with his disciples, he came into the parts of Dalmanutha.
11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, asking him a sign from heaven, tempting him.
12. And sighing deeply in spirit, he saith: Why doth this generation seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, a sign shall not be given to this generation.
13. And leaving them, he went up again into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water.
14. And they forgot to take bread; and they had but one loaf with them in the ship.
15. And he charged them, saying: Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.
16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying: Because we have no bread.
17. Which Jesus knowing, saith to them: Why do you reason, because you have no bread? do you not yet know nor understand? have you still your heart blinded?
18. Having eyes, see you not? and having ears, hear you not? neither do you remember.
19. When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They say to him, Twelve.
20. When also the seven loaves among four thousand, how many baskets of fragments took you up? And they say to him, Seven.
21. And he said to them: How do you not yet understand?
22. And they came to Bethsaida; and they bring to him a blind man, and they besought him that he would touch him.
23. And taking the blind man by the hand, he led him out of the town; and spitting upon his eyes, laying his hands on him, he asked him if he saw any thing.
24. And looking up, he said: I see men as it were trees, walking.
25. After that again he laid his hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly.
26. And he sent him into his house, saying: Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town, tell nobody.
27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi. And in the way, he asked his disciples, saying to them: Whom do men say that I am?
28. Who answered him, saying: John the Baptist; but some Elias, and others as one of the prophets.

29. Then he saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Peter answering said to him: Thou art the Christ.

30. And he strictly charged them that they should not tell any man of him.

31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the ancients and by the high priests, and the scribes, and be killed: and after three days rise again.

32. And he spoke the word openly. And Peter taking him, began to rebuke him.

33. Who turning about and seeing his disciples, threatened Peter, saying: Go behind me, Satan, because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but that are of men.

34. And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel, shall save it.

36. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?

37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

38. For he that shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation: the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

39. And he said to them: Amen I say to you, that there are some of them that stand here, who shall not taste death, till they see the kingdom of God coming in power.

1 Christ feedeth the people miraculously: 10 refuses to give a sign to the Pharisees: 14 admonisheth his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod: 22 giveth a blind man his sight: 27 acknowledgeth that he is the Christ, who should suffer and rise again: 34 and exhorteth to patience in persecution for the profession of the gospel.

Ver. 15. *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the leaven of Herod. The leaven is the doctrine of the Pharisees, by which they taught children to say to their parents corban, as well as other things contrary to the law of God. The leaven of Herod is the doctrine of the Sadducees, for with them Christ had had His most recent controversy, as appears from Matt. xvi. 1-12. For Herod, as well as many of the principal people at that time, were Sadducees (see Jos. xviii. c. 2). They denied the immortality of the soul, and lived as Atheists. So Herod lived in adultery, killed John, and committed many other crimes, having no fear of God. For although he thought that John had risen again in Christ, yet that opinion did not arise, out of faith, but was wrung out of him by fear. Others, with Origen and S. Jerome, understand by leaven the sect of the Herodians, who flattered Herod, saying that he was the Messiah. But that referred to Herod of Ascalon, not Herod Antipas, as I have shown on Matt. xxii. 16.*

Ver. 23. *And taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town, i.e., outside of Bethsaida, as is plain from ver. 22. He led him forth for the same reason that when He was about to heal the deaf and dumb man He took him aside from the multitude. This was, 1st For the sake of prayer, that, being alone, He might collect His*

thoughts, and unite Himself wholly to God, and pray the more intently and collectedly. 2nd To fly from the applause of men, and teach us to do the same. 3rd Because the citizens of Bethsaida were unworthy of the miracle of Christ; for although they had seen Him work so many miracles, they would not believe in Him.

And spitting upon his eyes. Fasting spittle does good to the purblind, but does not illuminate those who have actually lost their sight. The saliva, therefore, of Christ was not a natural but a supernatural remedy for blindness, being the instrument by which Christ's Godhead wrought.

S. Hilarion imitated this miracle by which Christ gave sight to a blind man, as S. Jerome relates in his *Life*. "A blind woman was brought to S. Hilarion, who said that she had expended all her substance upon physicians. Hilarion said to her, If thou hadst given to the poor what thou hast thrown away upon physicians, Christ the true Physician would have healed thee."

Laid His hands, i.e., when He had placed His hands upon the eyes of the blind man, and again removed them. For that is improbable which the Scholiast in S. Chrysostom says, that this blind man saw people (ver. 24) when Christ's hands were over his eyes. For this would have been a new and uncalled-for miracle.

Ver. 24. *And looking up, he said, I see men as it were trees, walking.* As much as to say, I see something obscurely and confusedly; for I see men walking, but in such a way that I cannot distinguish whether they are men or trees. Just as it happens to ourselves, says Bede; when we see people at a great distance, we can only distinguish men from trees by their motion, because men walk, but trees do not. The word *walking* must be referred to men, not to trees, as is plain by the Greek. The word *walking* in the Latin text, however, might refer to trees in this sense: I see men as it were trees split, and therefore two-footed, and so walking. This blind man, therefore, as yet in darkness, saw men as it were through a mist and cloud, in which they appeared greater than they really were, it might be as thick and tall as trees, as by means of magnifying glasses letters appear larger than they are in reality.

It is related of S. Gregory Thaumaturgus, that in the Decian persecution he fled with his deacon to a certain hill. A certain traitor made known where they were to the persecutors, who carefully searched the whole hill to discover Gregory. With strong faith in God, he stood in prayer, with eyes immovable and hands stretched out. But God smote the persecutors with inability to see. They returned and reported that they had seen nothing on the hill except two trees a little distant from one another. When they had gone away, the traitor himself went up the hill and saw two men, Gregory and his deacon, instead of the trees. He acknowledged that it was the work of Divine power that they had appeared to the persecutors to be trees, and