

# THE STORY BEGINS

(MARK 1:7-11)



Today we begin the course of readings which will cover the Gospel according to Mark during the season known as Ordinary Time.

Each of the evangelists has his own understanding of who Jesus is. Mark makes it clear from the first line of his narrative that Jesus is “the Son of God”, and he underlines this in our episode today, in which the divine voice identifies the newly baptised Jesus as “my Son, the Beloved”. This declaration comes to Jesus personally: it is not audible to those others who are present. Thus we, the readers or hearers of the Gospel, are let into the secret of who Jesus is, but no one else in the story is privy to this information. None of the characters really understands who Jesus is, until the centurion at the cross proclaims that he was indeed the Son of God.

The baptism of John the Baptist was a sign of people’s admission of their sins and their desire to amend their way of life. Jesus is showing solidarity with all those who wish to live a decent life, open to the word of God, and it is by identifying himself with such individuals that God reveals who he is and the Spirit comes upon him. We are invited to accompany Jesus in his ministry in Galilee and on his journey to Jerusalem. Mark’s vivid and fast-paced story will challenge us, as well as the persons we encounter on the way, to ask ourselves, “Who is this... ?” ■

## REFLECT

The four Gospel versions are not meant to be simply biographies of Jesus. They are, rather, statements of the evangelists’ different understandings of the person of Jesus: this is one of the reasons why the four narratives are distinct and present apparently inconsistent versions of the same event or saying of Jesus. So, for instance, Mark does not include the instruction from the heavenly voice, which says “Listen to him”. The experience here is that of Jesus himself, not of the witnesses round about.

The Gospel of Mark was written before the versions of Matthew and Luke: we may find Mark’s presentation more difficult and challenging. We may find ourselves relieved that we are not faced with the same questions that the disciples, for instance, have to confront and how they misunderstand what is happening. As we follow the narrative over the next weeks, Mark is inviting us to put ourselves in the shoes of the people whom Jesus meets and to ask ourselves what we would do in their situation.

The scriptures are the word of God, alive and active and confronting us today. This may sound like something alarming, but we might remember the first line of Mark’s Gospel version, that it is “Good News”. The fact that we begin with Jesus showing solidarity and identifying himself with those people who are open to the word and willing to examine their lives and amend them where necessary is a sign of hope for us all. Also, we might remember that at our baptism, we received the Holy Spirit, which tells us that we are given the power to live as disciples of Jesus. ■

## SAY

Jesus is God’s beloved Son.

## LEARN

Mark’s version of the Gospel is the oldest, written probably about AD 70 in Rome.

The symbolism of the dove in the story is obscure; its meaning is not clear.

Jesus’ being baptised is a sign of his solidarity with sinners.



## DO

Take an afternoon and read through the whole of Mark’s Gospel version, preferably at one sitting.



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

After the Lord was baptised, the heavens were opened,  
and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove,  
and the voice of the Father thundered:  
This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
who, when Christ had been baptised in the River Jordan  
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,  
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,  
grant that your children by adoption,  
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,  
may always be well pleasing to you.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 55:1-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;  
though you have no money, come!  
Buy corn without money, and eat,  
and, at no cost, wine and milk.  
Why spend money on what is not bread,  
your wages on what fails to satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and you will have good things to eat  
and rich food to enjoy.  
Pay attention, come to me;  
listen, and your soul will live.

With you I will make an everlasting covenant  
out of the favours promised to David.  
See, I have made of you a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and a master of the nations.  
See, you will summon a nation you never knew,  
those unknown will come hurrying to you,  
for the sake of the Lord your God,  
of the Holy One of Israel who will glorify you.

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found,  
call to him while he is still near.  
Let the wicked man abandon his way,  
the evil man his thoughts.  
Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him,  
to our God who is rich in forgiving;  
for my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
my ways not your ways – it is the Lord who speaks.

Yes, the heavens are as high above earth  
as my ways are above your ways,  
my thoughts above your thoughts.

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens  
and do not return without watering the earth,  
making it yield and giving growth to provide seed  
for the sower and bread for the eating,  
so the word that goes from my mouth  
does not return to me empty,  
without carrying out my will  
and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Isaiah 12

Response:

With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation.

- Truly, God is my salvation  
I trust, I shall not fear.  
For the Lord is my strength, my song,  
he became my saviour.  
With joy you will draw water  
from the wells of salvation. (R.)
- Give thanks to the Lord, give praise to his name!  
Make his mighty deeds known to the peoples!  
Declare the greatness of his name. (R.)
- Sing a psalm to the Lord  
for he has done glorious deeds,  
make them known to all the earth!  
People of Zion, sing and shout for joy  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

1 John 5:1-9

A reading from the first letter of St John.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ  
has been begotten by God;  
and whoever loves the Father that begot him  
loves the child whom he begets.  
We can be sure that we love God's children  
if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us;  
this is what loving God is –  
keeping his commandments;  
and his commandments are not difficult,  
because anyone who has been begotten by God  
has already overcome the world;  
this is the victory over the world –  
our faith.

Who can overcome the world?  
Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God:  
Jesus Christ who came by water and blood,  
not with water only,  
but with water and blood;  
with the Spirit as another witness –  
since the Spirit is the truth –  
so that there are three witnesses,  
the Spirit, the water and the blood,  
and all three of them agree.  
We accept the testimony of human witnesses,  
but God's testimony is much greater,  
and this is God's testimony,  
given as evidence for his Son.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
John saw Jesus coming towards him, and said:  
This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Mark 1:7-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.  
In the course of his preaching John the Baptist said:  
"Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel

down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

It was at this time that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. No sooner had he come up out of the water than he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
(all bow during the next three lines)  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Accept, O Lord, the offerings  
we have brought to honour the revealing of your beloved Son,  
so that the oblation of your faithful  
may be transformed into the sacrifice of him who willed in his compassion  
to wash away the sins of the world.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

Behold the One of whom John said:  
I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Nourished with these sacred gifts,  
we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord,  
that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son,  
we may be your children in name and in truth.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.