

## 1 Advent B 2017 SML MK 13:33-37

Last Sunday's Feast of Christ the King was celebrated on the last Sunday of the Church year. The First Sunday of Advent is celebrated on the first day of the Church year. The first day of the calendar year is January 1<sup>st</sup>. The first day of the fiscal year is July 1<sup>st</sup>. The first day of the Church year is the First Sunday of Advent.

Along with the change in the Church year is also a change in the Lectionary, or the book from which the readings at Mass are taken. The Lectionary runs on a three year cycle and the most notable difference in the readings among each of the three years is the gospel. Last year, the gospel readings were taken from Matthew. Next year, the gospel readings will be taken from Luke. This year, the gospel readings are taken from Mark. So providing background on the Gospel of Mark is in order.

Most have the misunderstanding that Matthew wrote his gospel first because the canon or the list of the books of the Bible order the four gospels as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Wrong. Scripture scholars have proven that Mark wrote his gospel first, and if you want their reasoning, then you will need

to attend one of my adult scripture series because explaining it would be a completely separate homily.

Scripture scholars have narrowed the date of Mark's gospel between the years 64 and 70 AD. In 64 AD was persecution of Nero, which the gospel mentions:

**Watch** (hold on to that word, "**Watch!**") out for yourselves. They will hand you over to the courts. You will be beaten in synagogues. You will be arraigned before governors and kings because of me, as a witness before them. But the gospel must first be preached to all nations. When they lead you away and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. But say whatever will be given to you at that hour. For it will not be you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. (13:9-13)

In 70 AD was the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which the gospel does not mention. So again, we know Mark wrote his gospel between 64 and 70 AD. For simplicity's sake, most date Mark's gospel in the year 65 AD.

Now you have heard more than a few times in my homilies this past year that Matthew wrote his gospel to hard core, inner

circle Jews. Hence, Matthew catered his message to a very Jewish audience, making heavy use of Jewish customs and feasts, quoting the Hebrew scripture constantly, describing Our Blessed Lord as another Moses.

Mark, on the other hand, wrote his gospel to Romans who were quite unfamiliar with Judaism, quite unfamiliar, therefore, with the religion in which Jesus was raised. Matthew, writing to Jews, knew his audience understood Jewish customs. Mark, on the other hand, needed to explain them:

Now when the Pharisees gathered together to Jesus, with some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands defiled, that is, unwashed.

Now, because Mark's Roman audience would have no idea what was the big deal about eating with defiled hands, or what that even meant, Mark added the following explanation:

For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels. 7:3-4

Also note Mark was not an apostle. Of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, only two were

apostles: Matthew and John. Mark and Luke were not. If Mark was not an Apostle, the obvious question is, “Where did Mark get his information?”

The Church Fathers have long been in agreement on the following three points:

1. Mark was not a hearer or an eye witness follower of our Blessed Lord;
2. Mark received his teaching from the Apostle Peter; and
3. Mark adapted Peter’s teaching to the needs of his hearers; namely, a Roman Church unfamiliar to both Judaism and our Blessed Lord.

Several years ago, I completed a course that was offered to the priests of the Diocese entitled “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds.” It is a course in pastoral leadership in five contexts:

1. leading oneself,
2. leading one-on-one,
3. leading a team,
4. leading a organization, namely the parish,
5. and finally, leading outside the parish.

When the course began, one of the first things each priest did was take a personality inventory to determine his

DISCposition, or stated simply, his personality type. Depending on the score, the priest would be categorized primarily in one of four personality types:

1. Dominant
2. Influence
3. Steady
4. Conscientious

My personality type is D for “Dominant.” Imagine that. My personality type can be described as:

- ✓ extroverted
- ✓ self initiating
- ✓ concise, decisive and direct
- ✓ outcome oriented
- ✓ risk taking
- ✓ wasting no time and wasting no words; at times even blunt,
- ✓ and asking “What’s the bottom line?”

I mention this because of the four gospel writers, Mark had to have been a D as well. Mark was much more urgent and insistent than the other Evangelists. In Mark, Our Blessed Lord was always going somewhere immediately or directly. Thirty-three times in the Gospel does Mark use the word *kai ethus*

“immediately.” Our Blessed Lord was always on the road leaving here or going there. Our Blessed Lord’s teaching was always fresh, direct and to the point. No words were wasted.

In addition is Mark’s use of “**Watch:**” Look at this morning’s gospel: Be **watchful!** You do not know when the time will come; **Watch** therefore, you do not know when the lord will come . . . **Watch!**” At the agony in the garden, “My soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Remain here and **watch!**”

For those of us who are:

- ✓ extroverted
- ✓ self initiating
- ✓ concise, decisive and direct
- ✓ outcome oriented
- ✓ risk taking
- ✓ wasting no time and wasting no words; at times even blunt,
- ✓ and asking “What’s the bottom line?”

Mark is our evangelist, and his gospel message will resonate with us more than the others. Mark’s message is we must learn to live as if Christ was crucified yesterday, rose this morning and will return again this afternoon. And should we decide not to do so, we can hardly fault the early warning

system that God has put in place in Mark's gospel: "Be watchful! Be alert!"