

PRAY

Jesus, you call ordinary people like Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow you and do extraordinary things. Help us hear and respond to your call in our lives. Amen.

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Forty years after Jesus' death and resurrection, many eyewitness disciples who followed and served him are dead or growing old.

The Emperor Nero—famous for fiddling while half of Rome burned on July 18, 64—persecuted Christians for causing the fire and put to death both Peter and Paul.

Two years later Jews in Israel rebelled against the Romans. The Roman Tenth Legion lay siege to Jerusalem and in A.D.70 ended the Jewish struggle for independence by burning and destroying the temple.

Destroying the temple ends the religion of the Old Testament. Jesus' followers and other Jews can no longer join together to worship, celebrate feasts, and offer sacrifices

at the temple. From this time the Christianity and Judaism of today begin evolving.

Who will tell the stories about Jesus that disciples who knew him have been telling? Who will dare to lead the Christian community when its first leaders have been killed? What will hold Christians together with no common center of worship like the temple?

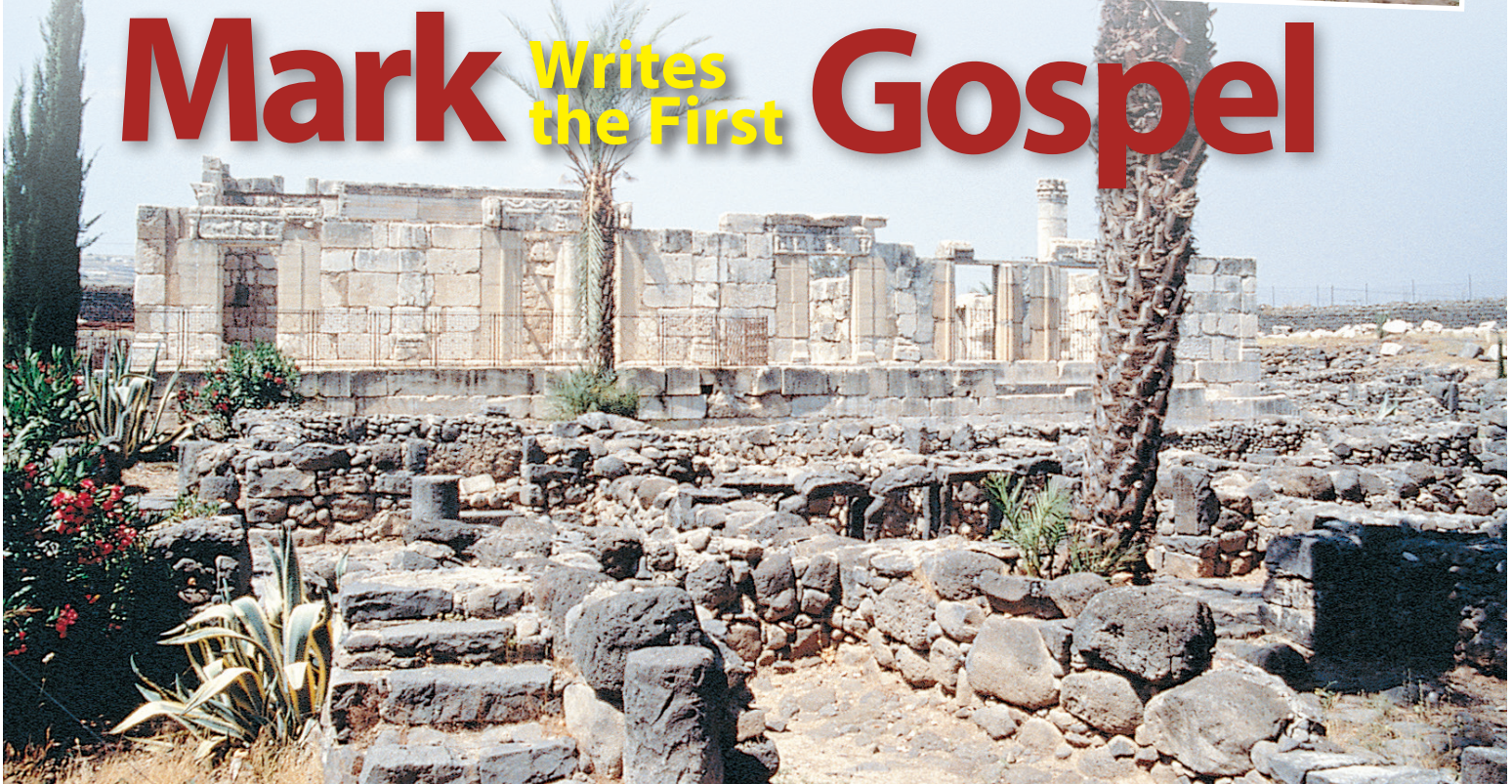
At this moment in history a Christian named Mark creates the first gospel. Mark collects stories the community has been telling about Jesus and arranges them into the narrative that has traveled through time to us. His gospel begins with John the Baptist preparing a way for God's coming

and Jesus receiving John's baptism. The narrative ends with three of Jesus' women disciples finding his tomb empty and a young man in white explaining Jesus has been raised up and is going before them to Galilee.

Capernaum is a fishing village on the north of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus lived here and taught in the synagogue. Dark stone foundations of the houses from Jesus' time surround ruins of the synagogue which was built in the 2nd century.



Mark Writes the First Gospel



Israel's wilderness rolls with barren hills that green with rain and hide bits of beauty.



A gospel is not like a newspaper story or biography. Mark does not write to tell us simply the who, what, where, when, and why facts of Jesus' life. Mark puts together this unique form of literature to tell people Jesus is the messiah. The gospel is a testimony. The word *gospel* means *good news*. This first gospel proclaims its good news in its first line. It testifies: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Christ is a title that makes a claim about who Jesus is. The word *messiah* in Hebrew and the word *Christ* in Greek both mean *the anointed one*. In Israel the anointed one is a title for the king. The people of Israel anointed their kings with oil rather than swearing them into office or crowning

them. To call Jesus the Christ is to claim he is the Spirit-filled king that Israel's prophets promised and Israel's people awaited.

Jesus' public ministry begins with his baptism, a scene which shows us in symbols that Jesus is God's Spirit-filled, beloved Son. As Jesus comes out of the water, he sees the heavens split open. The Spirit comes upon him like a dove. A voice from heaven addresses Jesus, "You are my beloved Son. I am pleased with you" (Mark 1.10-11).

Jesus' disciples realize fully he is God's Son and Israel's messiah only after his resurrection. But Mark, who is writing the story 40 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, knows how the story turns out. The first verse and the voice from heaven and the Spirit let us in on the secret of who Jesus is from the beginning—he is the Christ.

Often in the gospel, Mark has characters in the story ask rhetorical questions that no one in the story answers. That is because Mark wants his audience in A.D. 70 and us to answer. For example, when Jesus saves his disciples from drowning in a storm, they ask, "Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him?" (Mark 4.41). When Jesus frees a man from a demon at sabbath worship, people ask: "What is this? A new teaching—with authority?" (Mark 1.27).

Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and "Who do you say that I am?" Mark wants his hearers to answer like Peter, "You are the messiah" (Mark 8.27,29).

Hills surround the Sea of Galilee, the lowest fresh water lake in the world. Eight miles wide and 13 miles long, one can see across the lake.



Who is your **ROLE MODEL?**

Students from St. Michael the Archangel in Leawood, Kansas answer the question: Who is your role model?

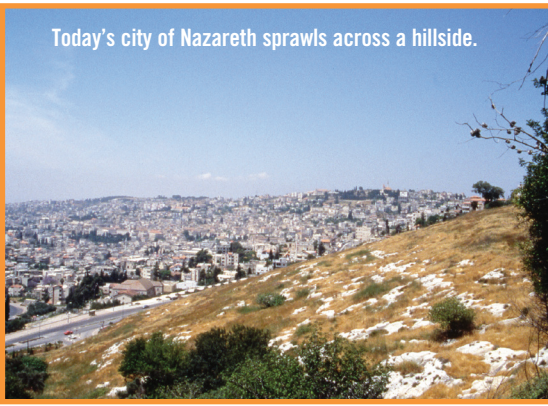


My role model is R. Lee Ermey. This man is a decorated Marine drill instructor. He has much discipline, great leadership skill, is very patriotic. He is not afraid to get "down and dirty" and to do the things that he is asking of the people he is leading.



My role model is someone I can look up to who's been through the same experiences I'm going through. She has a positive and energetic personality and is passionate about everything she believes in and does. She inspires me to be a better person through her actions, her love for Christ, and the care she shows for everyone around her. Her name is Sara and she is my Youth Minister.

Today's city of Nazareth sprawls across a hillside.



SUNDAY GOSPEL

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus gathers followers.

NARRATOR: After John's arrest, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of the reign of God.

JESUS: This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God draws near. Change your attitude and believe in the Gospel.

NARRATOR: As Jesus came along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew, casting a fishing net into the sea. They fished for a living.

JESUS: Come after me. I will make you fishers of people.

NARRATOR: Immediately they left their nets and followed Jesus. Jesus went on a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in their boat getting their nets ready to fish. Immediately Jesus called out.

JESUS: Come, follow me.

NARRATOR: They left their father Zebedee behind in the boat with the hired workers and went off with Jesus.

Mark 1.14-20

The way Mark characterizes Jesus' disciples makes them look like failures. Mark doesn't tell about Peter spreading the gospel but about Peter refusing to believe Jesus must suffer and die and denying he ever knew Jesus during his trial. Mark tells us that James and John promise to drink the cup Jesus drinks but they sleep through his agony in the garden and run away at his arrest.

Mark tells us Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and Salome stand by Jesus at his crucifixion, witness his burial, and find his tomb empty. But they tell no one he is risen because they are afraid (Mark 16.8).

Mark wants the hearers of the first gospel to know they aren't the only ones to feel awed and excited yet afraid and confused about following Jesus. That's how Peter, James, and John start out. That's how Mary Magdalene and the other women feel outside the empty tomb. Faith begins in awe and fear.

When the chief priest arrests Jesus and asks if he is the messiah, the son of the blessed one, Jesus says, "I am" (14.61-62). *I am* is God's name.

Jesus is condemned for blasphemy, for putting himself in God's place. Like the voice at Jesus' baptism, this trial scene near the end of Mark's gospel testifies that Jesus is the messiah, the Son of God.

The risen Jesus goes before us who follow him. Because of Mark's written story, countless Christians believe in Jesus and discover as they follow that he is with us as he promised.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is Mark's purpose for writing the first gospel?
- 2 What fears about following Jesus do you have?
- 3 Why do you think Peter, Andrew, James, and John follow Jesus so readily?
- 4 What attracts you about following Jesus?
- 5 When have you discovered Jesus with you?
- 6 How is Jesus a role model?



Lainey

My role model is my friend Morgan. She takes the time to appreciate the people and things in her life. She laughs and causes others to do the same. She's confident that God has amazing things in store

for her and handles them not knowing exactly what they are with grace. Most importantly, she constantly glorifies God by being herself because she knows that God created her beautifully and perfectly.

My role model is my mom because she is such a strong person. She is dedicated to her faith and her children. She has been through so much yet she still keeps her head up and pushes forward every day. Her heart is giant and filled with love for everyone. She is easy to talk to and a great mom!

Shannon



Max

My role model is my little brother Nate. He's one of the best people I know. He always does the right thing and has a lot of self-discipline. One of the best things is that he loves everyone, even the people he may not necessarily like. I try my best every day to be like him.

Jesus' new community

Jesus gathers a new community. He calls Andrew, Peter, James, and John to fish for people. He calls Peter's mother-in-law, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome to follow and serve him. They stay with Jesus during his ministry and become the first Christian community after his death and resurrection. They are the eyewitness generation.

The gospels remember many men and women who seek Jesus out to heal and free them. Perhaps they, too, belong to Jesus' new community. The leper who can't stop telling people about his healer. The countless sick and possessed people at Jesus' door.

Mark, the writer of the first gospel, belongs to the second generation of Jesus' followers. He and many others learn of Jesus from the eyewitness generation who have founded churches all around the Mediterranean area.

Mark belongs to the storytelling generation that hears and hands on what Jesus said and did.

The fearful, hesitant hearers of Mark's gospel belong to the third generation of Christians. In A.D. 70 they are the first to hear the good news of Jesus from the written gospel. These Christians become the generation of the book.

Today Jesus' new community is over 2,000 years old. In this time the Church has been old and new many times. What seems old in one generation may have been new a generation earlier. Until Pope Pius X urged Catholics in 1910 to receive communion frequently, people rarely did. Until 1962, when Pope John XXIII opened the windows of the Church to the world and the Holy Spirit, the Church followed the definitions and decisions of the

Council of Trent, which met from 1547-1563. This council reformed the Church in answer to the Protestant Reformation.

In 1962, John XXIII called bishops worldwide to gather at the Vatican in Rome and bring the Church up to date. He invited Protestants and women to observe. When the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, its reforms began immediately.

Learn about "the joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties" of teenagers in subSaharan Africa, in Haiti or Nicaragua, in Bolivia. Contact Catholicrelief.org to explore how your class or group might help teens in another country receive an education.

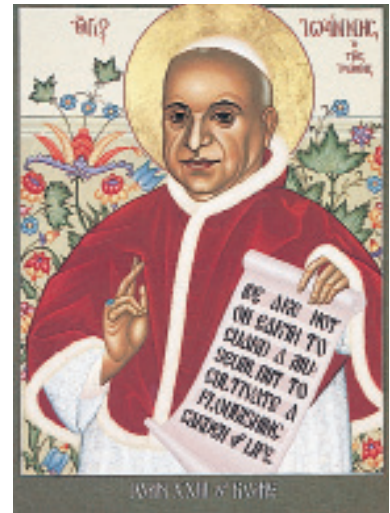
Churches turned their altars to face the people. Catholics around the world began to worship in their own languages instead of Latin. The Council understood the Church as the People of God and the Body of Christ, in which all the baptized are important and called to holiness.

Many men and women became lectors, befrienders, catechists, eucharistic ministers, servers. These changes promoted the "full, conscious, and active participation" of all people in our public worship.

The council wrote a document on ecumenism, committing the Catholic Church to dialog with other Christian denominations and religions. In 1999, Roman Catholic and Lutheran leaders signed statements that they agree God justifies us, not our good works. In 2017, Lutherans and Catholics celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Together they committed to move *From Conflict to Communion*.

The Council document called the *Church in the Modern World* called Catholics not just to work at getting to heaven but to transform injustice on earth. It continued the Catholic social teaching Pope Leo XIII began in the 1890s, defending the rights of workers to jobs and fair wages.

The document begins, "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of



the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (#1). Every person has basic rights to food, clothing, shelter, a family, education, employment, health care. Every person has the duty to respect and ensure these rights.

Bishops in the United States have continued to write pastoral letters on today's issues, especially criticizing the social attitudes that accept poverty, racism, colonialism, sexism, and the supposed natural and God-given inferiorities of some people. They teach that nuclear war is immoral and urge economic justice for all. They urge Catholics to end racism, respect the human dignity of people who are gay or lesbian or straight, and care for Earth.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1 Make a list as a group of what is old and what is new in the Church to you.
- 2 Invite parents, grandparents, or older people in the parish also to make a list of what is old and new in the Church. What differences do you find among generations? Why do you think Jesus' new community lasted?
- 3 For what do you want your generation of Christians to be known?
- 4 On what issues would you want the Church to reflect at a third Vatican council?