April 25th: Feast of Saint Mark, evangelist

Gospel text (*Mk* 16:15-20): Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature"

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Today, there is much to say about why the word of the Gospel does not echo with strength and conviction; why we Christians keep a hesitant silence regarding what we believe in, in spite of the so-called "new evangelization". Each one will make his or her own analysis about this and will come up with their own particular version.

However, on the Feast of St. Mark, while listening to the Gospel and looking at the Evangelist, we cannot but proclaim assuredly and gratefully where the source is and where the strength of our word lies.

The Evangelist does not speak because he has been told to do so by a recent sociological study, or because of political "prudence", or because "he feels like saying what he thinks", no; he does so because a presence and a command have certainly compelled him, from the outside, without coercion, but with the authority of He who deserves all the credit: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15). That is, we obediently evangelize, although we must do so gleefully and confidently.

On the other hand, our word is not presented just like any other, out of the market of ideas and views; rather, it has the whole weight of every strong and explicit message. Life or death depends upon its

recognition or rejection; and its truth and capacity for conviction come from the testimonial way, that is, it appears accredited by the signs of power in favor of the needy. This is why the word actually is an "announcement" — a public, happy and excited statement of a conclusive and saving fact.

Why, then, our silence? Fear? Shyness? St. Justin said that "though unlettered and without any fluency, they could persuade mankind because of their virtue." Thus, the sign or miracle of virtue is our eloquence. Let the Lord carry out, at least, His work, in our midst and with us: "While the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs" (Mk 16:20).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Just as the sun, the creature of God, is one and the same throughout the world, so the preaching of the truth shines everywhere and illuminates all those who want to come to the knowledge of the truth." (Saint Irenaeus of Lyon)

- "We are all called to be living writers of the Gospel, bearers of the Good News to every man and woman of today." (Francis)

- "Since the Ascension God's plan has entered into its fulfilment. We are already at 'the last hour' (I Jn 2:18). 'Already the final age of the world is with us, and the renewal of the world is irrevocably under way; it is even now anticipated in a certain real way, for the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real but imperfect' (Vatican Council II). Christ's kingdom already manifests its presence through the miraculous signs (Cf. Mk 16:17-18) that attend its proclamation by the Church (Cf. Mk 16:20)." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 670)