

own. Then he cleans out an evil spirit and heals diseases. Next he arrogates to himself the power to forgive sins: who does he think he is, for only God can forgive sins? Soon he calms a storm on the lake – but only God has power over the elements! The wonder grows.



## MARK'S IRONY

While we are watching all this, we, the Christian readers, know what is happening. But the disciples don't: they are seeing it all for the first time and learning for themselves, slowly. Then at last Peter blurts out, "You are the Messiah", though he still does not realise what this means in practice. Peter refuses to accept that it means that Jesus can reach his fulfilment only through suffering. We see all the disciples in the same frame of mind: they do not listen when Jesus speaks of suffering and death. They merely squabble among themselves about seniority. Mark's irony is that the whole Gospel is operating on two levels: that of the reader who knows the end of the story, and that of the actors who either refuse to believe at all or come to believe only sluggishly. Jesus will not accept any title given him until he stands before the high priest on trial. When he accepts the titles offered by the high priest, he is condemned as a blasphemer. Even after that the soldiers mock him as king of the Jews; we know this to be true, but they do not.

It is only when he is dead that the centurion speaks the full truth, "In truth this man was a son of God."

## Mass text

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

**Let my prayer come into your presence.  
Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.**

### FIRST READING Wisdom 6:12-16

### PSALM Psalm 62

**RESPONSE For you my soul is thirsting, O God,  
my God.**

1. O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. **R.**

2. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.  
For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. **R.**

3. So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. **R.**

4. On my bed I remember you.  
On you I muse through the night  
for you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. **R.**

### SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Stay awake and stand ready,  
because you do not know the hour  
when the Son of Man is coming.  
Alleluia!**

### GOSPEL Matthew 25:1-13

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I  
shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures where he  
gives me repose,  
near restful waters he leads me.**

### Next Sunday's Readings:

Proverbs 31:10-13. 19-20. 30-31  
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6  
Matthew 25:14-30



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# SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

In our Sunday and weekday readings at Mass the Church gives us short snippets from the scriptures. It is an unforgettable experience to read right through a Gospel and so get to know Jesus as he is presented in the teaching of one of the authorised messengers of the Good News. The shortest and almost certainly the earliest of the Gospels is Mark. The liturgy will be focusing on it at Mass during Year B, which begins in a few weeks' time when we enter Advent. We don't know who the writer was, and Marcus was a common name in the Roman Empire at the time, but a very ancient tradition in the Church links him to Peter at Rome. He is called "the interpreter of Peter" – whatever that means: translator? messenger? explainer?

From the Gospel itself it is clear that the whole is the work of one mind: it has the same features of language and storytelling, the same emphases and tricks of style. In this Greek text there remain many features of Aramaic, the language of Jesus and his fellow country people. The names are good Palestinian Jewish names, like Bar Jonah (son of Jonah), Yair (which becomes "Jairus" in Greek), Mary from Magdala (a village on the shore of the Lake of Galilee). Assume that Mark was a catechist, who told the stories of Jesus and his sayings so well that, as the first generation of disciples was getting old, he was asked to write them all down in his own pattern to ensure that they were not forgotten. He wrote in an uncomplicated, unfussy, eager style, using popular speech spoken by ordinary people all over the eastern Empire; it has been unkindly called "kitchen Greek". It is good evidence and attractively presented. He "zooms in" on a particular object: Jesus was asleep in the boat, "his head on the cushion". A woman bravely "touched his tunic from behind". Look at the bloody head of John the Baptist "on a dish"!



## The God who speaks



As we approach the end of this Year of the Word, Fr Henry Wansbrough OSB reflects on one of the Gospels.

8 NOVEMBER 2020

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YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK IV