

On the Feast day of St Mark - "Greetings!"

I recall a number of years ago celebrating Palm Sunday in Venice, and processing over bridges and through narrow streets, following the cantor who was leading a large crowd of us waving palm leaves and olive branches. At St Mark's Square we zigged up and zagged down, guided by temporary barriers until we entered the Basilica where parts of Saint Mark's relics are supposedly conserved and seeing the symbolic winged lion holding the bible carved over the doors - symbolic of both the city and the Saint.



I was scheduled to be in Santiago, as from Wednesday last and in the Church of Santa Susana tomorrow to lead Holy Communion - but instead I'm here at home. Our isolation is much less restrictive that it is for many of you, in that we live in the grounds of a Benedictine Abbey and are able to take our permitted exercise in the grounds - with the addition of some woods opposite, where the bluebells are a delight to the eye.

We are grateful, because some, including our good friend Sybille in Santiago are far more constrained in their apartments - so we must continue to pray for Sybille and those like her who cannot get out and enjoy fresh air and sunshine.

I hear from 'friend of the Camino' Alan in Australia, that Anzac Day yesterday was like no other Anzac Day that he can remember, and I guess that all of us will miss these key celebrations through the year - even when restricting conditions are lifted. We remember in our prayers all those from Australia and New Zealand who gave their lives in times of war.

We, the Camino Chaplains, are going to try to post some thoughts and meditations and ideas for your prayers on this site through the time we cannot actually be in Santiago, and here are some thoughts for this day:-

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John also to assist them.....Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem - Acts 13.4,5, and 13*

John Mark slips in and out of the story of the early Church, and this extract from Acts, set for today is just one such occasion when we find him travelling with the key figures, including Peter who, it is suggested by some, gave him the words for the gospel which bears his name.

We've heard a lot about travel in our texts recently, which might seem frustrating to us as we linger in isolation, with only limited opportunities to travel ourselves. Each morning we've been travelling with Moses and the freed slaves, as they journey on the Exodus to the land 'Flowing with Milk and Honey' - many of them complaining and grumbling about the 'blisters' of their travel, the times when they wondered if they would have been better off if they'd not set out at all.

Tomorrow, the third Sunday of Easter, we will hear once more the story of the walk to Emmaus which I referred to in my last message on this site - and we'll hear that the enlightened apostles, far from being tired and fed up at journey's end - shot off back to Jerusalem to tell the others of the Good News - that Jesus had denied those who would try to isolate him. He had risen! He had risen indeed!

And of course if we go back to Mark's gospel and look for his resurrection story we find a very different message - indeed there is no resurrection story (if we discount the rather weak postscript, seemingly added later). For Mark, the young man in white (was that Mark himself?) said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid' (Mark 16.6-8)

I always think that to be a great way for Mark to end the story. He is not going to mess about with some fancy appearance as an ending, instead he leaves everyone in disarray as they realise how the man they had followed and then mourned was indeed who he said he was. Jesus Christ told the apostles what would happen, and happen it has, and now "The Camino continues"

### The Collect for St Mark

Almighty God,  
who enlightened your holy Church  
through the inspired witness of your evangelist Saint Mark:  
grant that we, being firmly grounded  
in the truth of the gospel,  
may be faithful to its teaching both in word and deed;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Our prayers could go on forever at the moment, but thankfully God is more aware than we are of all the situations where he is needed at this time - here are just a few of them:-

We pray for all who rely on the Camino for their livelihoods, including the albergués, the restaurants, the tour organisers and walk leaders - we pray for those whose plans to be pilgrims this year have been halted - for the Churches in Spain of all denominations, and for our own churches and their people - for all those who have Covid 19 and their families and for those who mourn - for doctors and nurses and all who work in hospitals care homes and local medical practices - for farmers and food processors and packagers and all who bring food to the shelves of our shops, and those behind screens who sell to us.

**Please allow us to pray for - You**, your family, your congregation, your exploration of new ways of ministry in difficult times - the things on your heart this day. May the Christ who defies the rules walk closely with you, now and always.

God has called us to journey for a season through the wilderness places;  
**And so, as Jesus did before us, we will set out once more to wander in an uncomfortable landscape and wrestle with its challenges, that through the tempering action of the Spirit, we may emerge ready to do the work of the Kingdom.**

### **Blessing**

God the Father,  
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead  
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life  
and the blessing of Almighty God  
Father Son and Holy Spirit  
Be with you as you continue your Camino- and for all time

Walk on in peace, to love and serve the Lord  
**In the Name of Christ, Amen, Alleluia!**

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