

HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
FEAST OF ST. MARK, APRIL 25, 2017
PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM, COLUMBUS, OHIO

Today we remember and celebrate the Evangelist Saint Mark, who from his youth kept company with the disciples of Jesus as the Acts of the Apostles recounts (Acts 12:12). Initially, he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary voyage. Afterward, he went with Peter to Rome. Saint Mark was a disciple and a missionary who brought the joy of the Gospel to others, and his written work continues to bring this same joy even to us today! He is a joyful, missionary disciple, and, as such, is a model for the priests of today.

He is also one who journeys with Peter. As men in formation and as future priests you too will have to journey with Peter and his successors, as part of a living Tradition and as men of communion. You will journey with him even to the “ends of the earth.” Today’s first reading concludes with a reference to Peter in Babylon, alluding to the difficult situation of the Christians in Rome, similar to the situation of the Israel in Babylon during exile. Here, Peter also refers to Mark as “my son.” Once more I wish to assure you of the Holy Father’s closeness to you his sons.

What message does the author of the Letter of Peter have for his listeners – his spiritual children? First, it is to be humble. *Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* The reading today began with these words: *Clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings for one another.* (1 Peter 5:5b) It is fitting that St. Gregory the Great should be in the mural in the Chapel of Saint Turibius, for he coined the phrase *Servus Servorum Dei* to describe the role of the Pope, but it could be a fitting title for us all – to be servants of the servants of God. The Church needs humble servants of the Gospel! As you prepare for priestly ordination, especially at the Eucharist, I encourage you constantly to think of Jesus at the Last Supper who humbly washed the feet of his disciples.

Humility is the attitude that qualifies us as disciples and saves us from the vice of pride, which St. Gregory the Great calls the “Queen and Mother of all sins.” The author warns: *Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.* (1 Peter 5:8) Yes, the devil is an active presence who seeks to ruin your vocation, especially through the sin of pride. We see it in the Church all too often – those who are self-referential, who do not hesitate to speak of all their accomplishments, and who seek ecclesiastical promotion and position! The apostle exhorts us to resist him, *steadfast in the faith.* (1 Peter 5:9) This is the faith that comes from God, as Pope Francis said in his first encyclical letter:

“Precisely because it is linked to love, the light of faith is concretely placed at the service of justice, law, and peace. Faith is born of an encounter with God’s primordial love wherein the meaning and goodness of our life become evident ...”
(Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 51)

We overcome the temptations of the devil in Him who vanquished the devil in the desert. It is by relying on God – the strength that comes to us in His Word and Sacrament – that we exercise the virtue of humility. The Lord is our salvation – not ourselves. Pope Benedict, in his apostolic letter opening the Year of Faith five years ago, said that “Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with Him.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, 10)

Fidelity to him is not always easy. Nevertheless, the Apostle assures us: *The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ Jesus will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little.* (1 Peter 5:10)

My advice to you then on this Feast of St. Mark is to be humble and to rely on the power of Christ Jesus who gives you His grace. Be joyful missionary disciples as you respond to his command: *Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.* (Mark 16: 15) Be a true Apostle, one who is sent, for *they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.* (Mark 16:20)