

MARK

The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter

STUDY GUIDE

Michael Pakaluk, PhD Fr. Patrick Winslow, JCL

Copyright © 2019 Saint Benedict Press, LLC.

All rights reserved. With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical review, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Excerpts from the English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church for use in the United States of America © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible—Second Catholic Edition (Ignatius Edition), copyright © 2006 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All right reserved.

All excerpts from papal homilies, messages, and encyclicals copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana. All rights reserved.

Cover image: St Mark the Evangelist (oil on canvas), Godfried Maes (1649–1700). Brussels (Belgium). Photo by Sterckx, Marleen, KIK. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

ISBN: 978-1-5051-1261-0

Catholic Scripture Study Programs published exclusively by
Saint Benedict Press, LLC
PO Box 410487
Charlotte, NC 28241
www.SaintBenedictPress.com

Printed and bound in the United States of America



WELCOME TO MARK

We owe you an apology.

Last year was the first year in over a decade that a new CSS course was not released. But we had a good excuse! Our team at Saint Benedict Press took a year to partner with the Thomistic Institute and the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph to develop *Credo*, a groundbreaking RCIA program. The time and resources we committed to this 36-week program precluded us from working on a new CSS course. So again, we owe you an apology for that.

Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!

Hopefully what you hold in your hands will make up for last year. We are thrilled to bring you *Mark: The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter*, hosted by Dr. Michael Pakaluk and CSS veteran Fr. Patrick Winslow. Fr. Winslow does not need much of an introduction since he is a “fan favorite” among our CSS customers, but Dr. Pakaluk is new to the CSS team. Yet despite his rookie status, his accolades go on for miles.

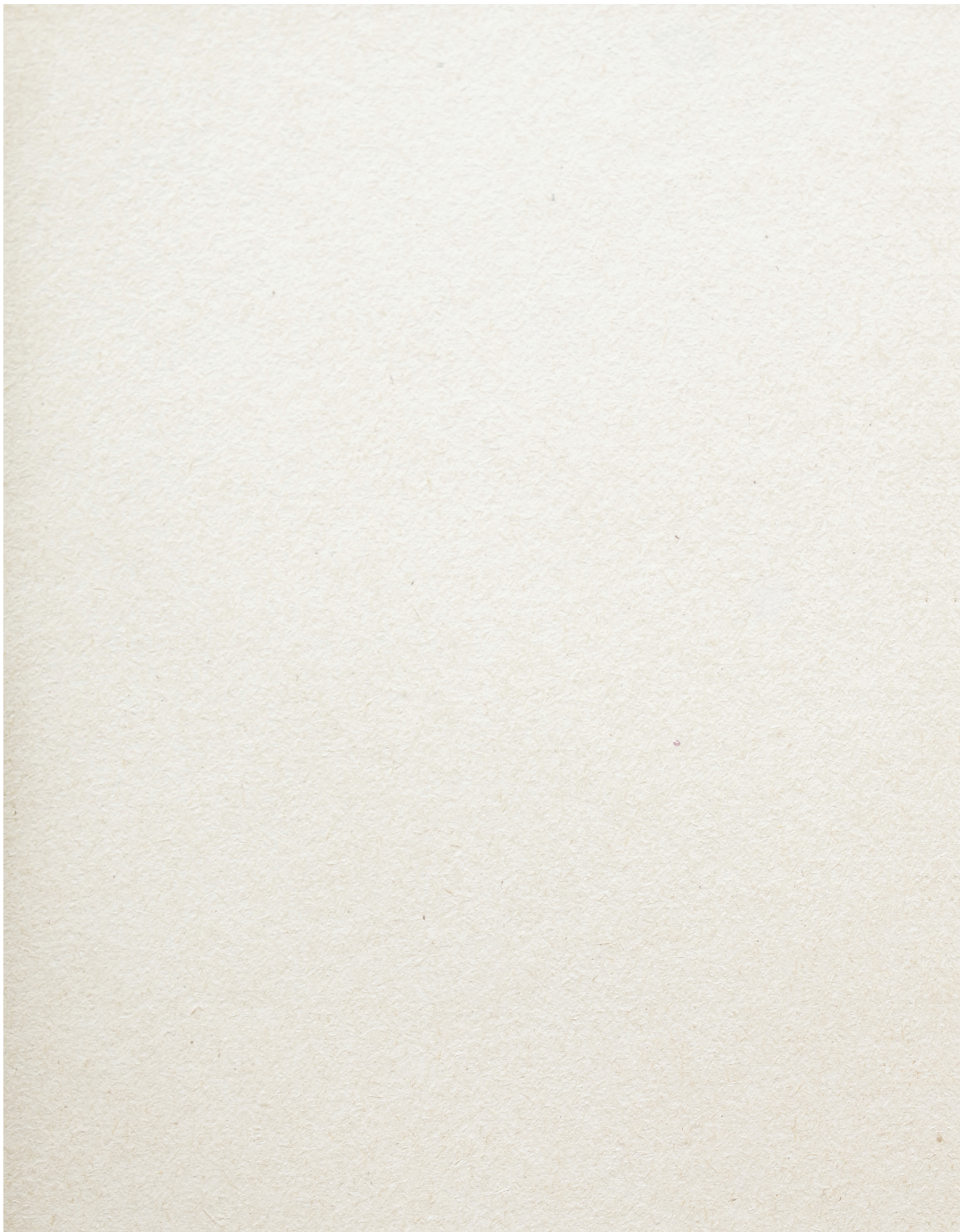
Dr. Pakaluk is a renowned scholar and a product of both Harvard and the University of Edinburgh. He has held positions at Clark University, Ave Maria University, and the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is a member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas. Among other accomplishments, he has penned several books, including *The Memoirs of St. Peter*. It was this latest book that got him on our radar, as it is a new translation of the Gospel of Mark, one that reveals startling nuances and idiosyncrasies in the original Greek text that have been camouflaged by English translations. While Dr. Pakaluk will be sticking to the RSV-CE translation for this program, his knowledge of this Gospel is greater than perhaps anyone on the planet.

The reason his new book is called *The Memoirs of St. Peter* is because Mark’s Gospel is traditionally seen as Peter’s retelling of the life of Christ. Mark sat at Peter’s feet and recorded all that our first pope had to say about our Lord and Savior. It’s arguable that no one outside of the Blessed Virgin Mary was closer to Jesus than Peter, so for this reason, the Gospel of Mark should attract our utmost attention and respect.

I won’t tell you too much more so as to not ruin the fun, but I promise you, some of our most loyal and valued customers, that Dr. Pakaluk and Fr. Winslow have put together a truly special program that will both entertain you and enrich your spiritual life.

May God bless you and your families!

Conor Gallagher, Publisher





CONTENTS

Understanding Your Guide	VII
My Personal Checklist: Before the Study	XI
SESSION 1	
The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter	1
SESSION 2	
Jesus Calls Peter and the Disciples	15
SESSION 3	
New Wine into New Wine Skins	31
SESSION 4	
Plundering the House of the Strong Man	45
SESSION 5	
The Sowing of the Seed	59
SESSION 6	
The Mercy of God Among Us	73
SESSION 7	
Take Heart and Have No Fear	87
SESSION 8	
What Comes Out of a Man Is What Defiles Him	103
SESSION 9	
The Son of Man Must Suffer Many Things	119
SESSION 10	
Jesus Prepares His Disciples for His Passion and Death	133
SESSION 11	
Teachings on Marriage, Children, Wealth, and Ambition	149

MARK: THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE EYES OF PETER

SESSION 12	
Jesus Takes His Place Teaching in the Temple.....	165
SESSION 13	
Jesus Establishes Himself as the True Teacher.....	179
SESSION 14	
Keep Watch	197
SESSION 15	
Jesus Is Betrayed, Arrested, Condemned, and Abandoned	211
SESSION 16	
The Passion and Death of the Lord	227
SESSION 17	
The Resurrection and Ascension.....	243
SESSION 18	
The Teaching of the First Pope	257
My Personal Checklist: After the Study.....	270
Supplemental Material.....	271



UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUIDE

What's inside your Study Guide for Mark: The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter? Here's an overview.

Study Sessions

The *Study Guide* is divided into eighteen study sessions. Each session is further divided into a “Self Study” section and a “Group Study” section. These sections are designated (along with the session number) by the caption in the colored bar along the outside edge of each page.

The following elements appear in each of the eighteen sessions of the Study Guide:

SELF STUDY

The first section of each session, designated as “Self Study,” helps you prepare individually for the group study. Before coming together with the other participants, you can spend some time on your own reading the scriptural text, reflecting on the study notes in this section, and looking ahead to the questions for group discussion. Your group may have you write the responses to the questions you can answer before the session in order to prepare for a more rewarding group discussion.

Optional use of the self study section: We highly recommend that you prepare for the group experience by using the “Self Study” section. But we recognize that busy schedules don't always allow for that possibility. So even if you're sometimes unable to prepare ahead of time, the group session recaps, videos, and discussions will still offer you valuable insights into the scriptural text. As you view and listen, you can still take part in the conversation and take notes on the videos and discussions. In addition, as time allows, you can always go back to review the material in the book.

Session Readings

The scriptural citations at the bottom of the opening page of each session identifies the specific readings to be studied in that particular session. The scriptural texts quoted in the Study Guide and Leader Guide come from the Revised Standard Version-Second Catholic Edition (RSV-2CE) translation of the Bible. Other Catholic versions are available, but you should be aware that the wording of the biblical text will vary in other translations.

Non-Catholic Bibles typically lack seven books that are found in the Catholic Bible. So make sure the version you choose is an approved Catholic Bible such as the RSV-2CE or one of the editions of the *New American Bible* (NAB). The Douay-Rheims (DR) version is also an approved translation and an old favorite of many Catholics, but keep in mind that some of its older

language may seem unfamiliar, and many of its books have names that differ from more contemporary translations.

Introduction

A short description of the scriptural passages being studied introduces the session.

Prayer to Prepare for Study

Prayer should be an integral part of every aspect of our lives, especially when we embark on a study of Scripture. We must ask God for the knowledge, wisdom, diligence, and humility necessary to understand his Word, and for the grace to change our lives by responding in faith and obedience to what he says. The words of these prayer reflects in a beautiful and concise way the goals of this study. You will find them at the beginning of every “Self Study” section.

Study Notes

These extensive notes are in many ways the “meat” of this Bible study. They provide insights into the historical, cultural, moral, and wider biblical context of the entire passage under study. They will help you understand and reflect upon what you read in the Gospel, offer occasional comments on the text by the Church Fathers and other saints, and provide answers to common questions about difficult or puzzling passages.

GROUP STUDY

The second section of each session, designated as “Group Study,” takes you and the other participants in your group through your study together. It includes prayers, videos, questions for reflection or discussion, and other aids to study: definitions of key words that may be unfamiliar, quotes from the saints and Church documents, and relevant citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

Opening Prayer

The opening prayer is for the group to pray together. It’s adapted from Scripture—Psalm 119—and is prayed at the beginning of each session.

Teaching Video

The Teaching Video, the first of two videos for each session, is hosted by Dr. Michael Pakaluk. The Teaching Video for the first session offers an introduction to the Gospel of Mark. The next 16 sessions follow chronologically the 16 chapters of the Gospel, while session 18 focuses on the first letter of St. Peter. While the study notes cover the entire text designated for each session, this video offers a more focused approach.

We encourage you to take notes on the lines provided under various topical headings drawn from the video presentation. We recommend this activity to help you remember what you have heard.



Small Group Discussion

If your study has ten or more participants, you may hold discussions in small groups of five to seven. Each small group will have its own discussion leader prepared to guide the group. The small group discussion for each session will respond to two sets of questions: “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application.”

Digging Deeper

The “Digging Deeper” questions prompt you in two ways: First, the questions help you recall some of the insights you have learned in reading the scriptural passage and the study notes. Second, the questions help you reflect more deeply by considering some wider issues raised by what you have learned.

Life Application

The “Life Application” questions are posed to help you consider how you might apply to your own life the key points from each session. After this discussion, you will be able to consider your answers in light of the insights provided by the “Life Application Video.” Answers to these questions will vary according to the life circumstances of each participant.

Before turning to the second video, the group will take a five-minute break to socialize, stretch your legs, use the restroom, and enjoy refreshments.

Life Application Video

After returning from your break, you’ll gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Patrick Winslow. His insights focus on how to apply to your everyday life the scriptural passage being studied. We recommend that you simply listen instead of taking notes on this video.

How Then Shall We Live?

This section serves as a summary of the insights in the “Life Application Video.” Since you haven’t taken notes on the video, we recommend that you silently review this section to prepare for responding to the challenges in “Living It Out.”

Living It Out

This section prompts you to pray, then discern and write down the changes that God is asking you to make in your life, especially over the course of the next week, based on what you have learned. You’ll be given three to five minutes to sit quietly and reflect on the challenges you face in this regard. Then you’ll have an opportunity to share what you’re thinking and feeling if you’re comfortable doing so.

Closing Prayer

Each session will close with the group praying aloud together the prayer provided. Each prayer has been chosen for its relevance to some aspect of that particular session. The closing prayers are drawn from Scripture and other traditional sources.

ADDITIONAL STUDY AIDS

Arranged throughout both the “Self Study” and the “Group Study” portions of the guides are special sections with additional relevant information and insights. These are intended to supplement your knowledge and enhance your understanding of the scriptural passages being studied:

Words to Know

A list of key words or phrases that defines terms that might be unfamiliar or expounds upon their basic meaning.

Catechism Connections

Citations for relevant passages from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Rome to Home

Relevant excerpts from Church documents such as papal pronouncements and statements of ecumenical councils.

Voices of the Saints

Relevant quotes from saints throughout history.

My Personal Checklist

At the beginning of the first group session of *Mark: The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter*, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: Before the Study” (p. xi), which is a list of some personal benefits that we hope you will receive through this experience. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page.

At the end of the last session of the study, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: After the Study” (p. 270) so you can reflect on the areas in which you have grown personally through the study. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page. *Both of these checklists are for your use only; they should not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.*



MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

Before the Study

Here are some personal benefits you can receive through this study of *Mark: The Gospel Through the Eyes of Peter*. Check all those you hope to receive. At the end of the study, you'll have a chance to review the list again to reflect on the areas in which you've grown.

This checklist is for you only. It will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.

- I want to know God more personally and intimately through studying his Word.
- I want to discover what makes the Gospel of Mark different from the other Gospels.
- I want to come to know Jesus in a more personal way.
- I want to understand why it's important to view Jesus as more than just a great moral teacher.
- I want to know why we view Mark's Gospel as being Peter's witness to the life of Christ and how viewing it in that light affects our interpretation of it.
- I want to discuss the deeper meanings of Jesus' healings and battles with evil spirits.
- I want to understand what the Church teaches on the End Times and how that teaching applies to my life.
- I want to learn more about the mission Jesus gave to the apostles and how my own mission is reflected in this.
- I want to become better at evangelization and answering common misconceptions about the Catholic faith.
- I want to know how the offices and hierarchy of the Church can still be respected and are still important despite the reality of human weakness in those who fill those offices.
- I want to learn more about the symbolic meaning of some of Jesus' most well-known parables.
- I want to dive deeper than ever before into Christ's passion and crucifixion in order to grow spiritually through his sufferings.
- I want to study the times in the Gospel where it appeared Jesus was angry or lost his temper in order to better understand the difference between the sin of wrath and righteous anger.
- I want to better understand the Church's teaching, grounded in Scripture, on the nature of marriage.
- I want to learn how to be more childlike in my spirituality, learning how to trust more in God's providential care.
- I want to have a better understanding of the theological virtue of hope and how it is more than just wishful thinking.
- I want to see the connection between the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- I want to know how Peter began to fulfill his role as pope in the early Church.
- I want to read more about how Jesus administered to sinners so that I can strive to draw lost souls back to the Church.
- I want to have a discussion about the nature of miracles, both those preformed by Christ in Scripture and in today's time, and how they can strengthen our faith but can never replace faith.



Saint Mark (oil on copper), Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri) (1591-1666) (studio) / Private Collection / Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images



SESSION 1

THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE EYES OF PETER

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

2 PETER 1:16–18

SESSION READINGS

THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF EACH CHAPTER OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK, ACTS 2, 2 PETER 1, INTRODUCTION TO *THE MEMOIRS OF ST. PETER* BY MICHAEL PAKALUK (REGNERY PUBLISHING, 2019), FOUND IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL ON PAGE 271

Introduction

“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ,” said St. Jerome (*Commentary on Isaiah*, bk 18, prologue). “How I wish your bearing and conversation were such that, on seeing or hearing you, people would say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ,” wrote St. Josemaria Escriva (*The Way*, 2). St. Josemaria also adds, “May you seek Christ: may you find Christ: may you love Christ” (*The Way*, 382). These words express our purpose and goal in undertaking this study.

We sometimes call St. Mark’s Gospel “the Gospel of Peter” because Mark put into writing the preaching of St. Peter. Mark’s Gospel was Peter’s Gospel as told to Mark. We can imagine Mark sitting at Peter’s feet, writing down all that he had to say about the life and teachings of Jesus. That image is a nice parallel to the famous statue of our first pope sitting in the basilica that bears his name; how many pilgrims have trod past that statue and rubbed his feet over the years? At these very same feet sat one of the authors of the Gospel.

Since Peter was the first of the apostles, his teaching had tremendous authority in shaping how the life of Christ was first presented. We take a peek into this view through the eyes of Peter when we explore Mark’s Gospel, which is the shortest and most basic. Its storyline about the life of Christ is simple and clear. It does not, for example, weave “sermons” into its narrative, such as Matthew’s “Sermon on the Mount” or the “Sermon on the Plain” found in Luke.

Mark’s Gospel is filled with concrete details of an eyewitness. It tells us, from the point of view of Peter, what it was like to be with Jesus during the years of the Lord’s public ministry. In studying this Gospel, we join those early disciples to learn what following the Lord means for us today.

Prayer to Prepare for Study

Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all being, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Take from me the double darkness in which I have been born, an obscurity of sin and ignorance. Give me a keen understanding, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally. Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and help in the completion. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—St. Thomas Aquinas

Study Notes

These notes provide insights to help you understand and reflect upon the biblical text.

- ✦ Let’s look first at Acts 2. We are looking at Acts 2 because it gives a speech of Peter where he summarizes the life of Christ.



- ✦ The life of Christ on earth ends with his ascension into heaven (see Mk 16:19–20). Then begins the life of the Church as “sent” into the world and assisted by Christ. The Church is given divine support in this task through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13).
- ✦ The first “act” of an apostle following Pentecost is actually a speech by Peter (Acts 2:14–36). Peter immediately assumes and shows his leadership in the Church and among the apostles.
- ✦ Half of Peter’s speech consists of quotations from the Old Testament. Remember that the only “Bible” for the apostles was the Old Testament. If we want to imitate the apostles, we should aim to be as familiar with the Old Testament as they were.
- ✦ In the Gospel of Mark, there are numerous times when Peter saw that the Old Testament was fulfilled in the life of Christ, such as in the prophecy of Christ’s predecessor, John the Baptist (Mk 1:1–3), or the entry into Jerusalem (11:9–10). In his speech here, Peter sees that prophecies continue to be fulfilled in the life of the Church.
- ✦ The quotation from the prophet Joel tells of a pouring out of the Spirit such that prophecy becomes widespread. “The day of the Lord” has arrived (Acts 2:20), such that anyone who calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved (v. 21).
- ✦ But what is the significance of the lines from Joel about wonders in heaven and on earth (Acts 2:19–20)? It’s possible that Peter understood these lines to have been fulfilled at the time of the Crucifixion when “there was darkness over the whole land” (Mk 15:33). As it was the Passover then and thus a full moon, perhaps in the evening of that day the moon appeared to be blood red (Acts 2:20).
- ✦ Peter identifies Christ as “Jesus of Nazareth,” taking the person to be familiar to his crowd. Nazareth was then and still is a humble and even ugly town. Peter chooses a very humble way to identify him, not, for example, “Jesus, son of David” (mentioning his royal descent) or “Jesus, attested by John the Baptist.”
- ✦ We will see in Mark’s Gospel that Jesus impresses Peter with the mighty works he does. That shows through here: “a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22). He uses three words for the same thing, for emphasis: mighty work (Gr. *dunamis*), wonder (Gr. *teras*); and sign (Gr. *semeion*). The first of these is most common in Mark.
- ✦ We will see in Mark’s Gospel, too, that there are many concrete details which evoke the viewpoint of an eyewitness. Peter similarly uses a phrase that evokes an eyewitness point of view: “which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).
- ✦ Peter’s summary of the life of Christ is found in this important first speech. Jesus worked many mighty works, which were widely witnessed, and he was betrayed and put to death, and then raised up, as he had foretold (Acts 2:22–24). This is basically what the Gospel of Mark says. If you sit down and read it in one sitting, this is the impression you will get.


 MARK: THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE EYES OF PETER

- ✦ Peter's quotation from beloved Psalm 16 (Acts 2:25–28) raises the question: if Jesus does not verify this psalm, if he is not its fulfillment, who else does verify and fulfill it?
- ✦ That Jesus was not “abandoned to Hades” (Acts 2:31) seems to imply that he was in Hades, only not “left” there. This “descent into hell” on the part of the Lord after his death has been part of Christian belief from the very beginning, as seen in the Apostles' Creed.
- ✦ In the Gospel of Mark, the apostles are described as not understanding what Jesus meant when he foretold that he would rise from the dead (Mk 9:10). Here, Peter shows a very clear comprehension (Acts 2:31). It was not possible for death to have a hold on Christ; his flesh could not see corruption.
- ✦ In the Gospel of Mark, these lines from Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34–35) are quoted by Jesus to refute the religious authorities (Mk 12:36). Here, Peter takes them to refer to the Ascension: “For David did not ascend to into the heavens” (Acts 2:34). Peter means the line in the psalm: “Sit at my right hand.” He interprets this as an invitation from the Father to take his place in heaven. Again, this is a matter of Christian belief from the beginning, as in the Apostles' Creed: “he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”
- ✦ Peter's phrase, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know *assuredly*” (Acts 2:36, emphasis added) echoes how the Lord would emphasize something by saying, “Amen I say to you,” (see Mk 10:15, 14:9). But *amen* is an Aramaic word, and Peter has formulated an equivalent expression in Greek.
- ✦ In “God has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), the word *Lord* is *Kurios*, and the word *Christ* is, of course, *Christos*. That he is Christ means he is anointed by God as prophet, priest, and king. God affirmed that he was Christ in many ways, especially at his baptism in the Jordan by John, at the Transfiguration, and by the Resurrection. There is a special way in which his ascent into heaven to take a seat at the right hand of the Father confirms him as Lord. In the Psalm verse, an earthly authority is addressing the divine authority referring to a third authority, who is Jesus, the Son, and confirmed as Lord: “The Lord said to my Lord” (vv. 34–35).
- ✦ Let's turn now to 2 Peter 1. We are interested in this chapter mainly because of the verses 16–21 in the first chapter. These refer to the Transfiguration. One can see from Acts 2 and from these lines that these miracles, which transformed Jesus entirely, changing his appearance or actually changing his place, from earth to heaven, made a strong, lasting impression on Peter. He wants to talk about them as soon as he has a chance.
- ✦ The phrase “cleverly devised myths” (2 Pt 1:16) in Greek has the sense, “a story told with skill in eloquent language.” Could this be a reference back to the Gospel of Mark, and Peter is aware of how simple and unsophisticated its language is?
- ✦ The phrases “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pt 1:16) and “we heard this voice borne from heaven” (v. 18) emphasize the eyewitness character of Peter's reports. Similarly, Mark's Gospel contains many concrete details which bring home its eyewitness character.



- ✦ God's voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (2 Pt 1:17), but in Mark, God says, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mk 8:7). There is no contradiction: assume God said all three. And this is exactly what Matthew recounts: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Mt 17:5).
- ✦ Verses 14–15 seem to suggest that Peter has received some kind of personal revelation that he would die soon. He writes with a particular urgency. When he says his purpose is "that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things," (2 Pt 1:15) he may have in mind also his account of the truth about Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

To prepare for small group discussion, turn ahead now to this session's "Digging Deeper" and "Life Application" sections.



Rome to Home

Among the reasons for which the Holy Scripture is so worthy of commendation—in addition to its own excellence and to the homage which we owe to God's Word—the chief of all is, the innumerable benefits of which it is the source; according to the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself, who says: "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." (2 Tim. iii., 16-17) That such was the purpose of God in giving the Scripture of men is shown by the example of Christ our Lord and of His Apostles. For He Himself Who "obtained authority by miracles, merited belief by authority, and by belief drew to Himself the multitude" (S. Aug. de util. cred. xiv. 32) was accustomed in the exercise of His Divine Mission, to appeal to the Scriptures. He uses them at times to prove that He is sent by God, and is God Himself. From them He cites instructions for His disciples and confirmation of His doctrine. He vindicates them from the calumnies of objectors; he quotes them against Sadducees and Pharisees, and retorts from them upon Satan himself when he dares to tempt Him. At the close of His life His utterances are from Holy Scripture, and it is the Scripture that He expounds to His disciples after His resurrection, until He ascends to the glory of His Father. Faithful to His precepts, the Apostles, although He Himself granted "signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Act xiv., 3) nevertheless used with the greatest effect the sacred writings, in order to persuade the nations everywhere of the wisdom of Christianity, to conquer the obstinacy of the Jews, and to suppress the outbreak of heresy. This is plainly seen in their discourses, especially in those of St. Peter: these were often little less than a series of citations from the Old Testament supporting in the strongest manner the new dispensation.

—Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*

Opening Prayer

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. . . . Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes. I am your servant; give me understanding, that I may know your testimonies! . . . Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word! Let my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your word.

—Ps 119:103–5, 124–25, 169–70

Teaching Video

The first video, hosted by Dr. Michael Pakaluk, focuses on the Gospel of Mark. Here are some highlights of Dr. Pakaluk's presentation, with room to take notes as you view the video to assist you in the group discussion.

The Gospel of Peter as told to Mark

The structure of Mark's Gospel

Mark's loveable language



A Gospel of an eyewitness

Peter's preaching in Acts



Catechism Connections

These readings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) will deepen your understanding of this session's presentations and discussions. The numbers identify the relevant paragraphs in the Catechism.

- ✦ It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church determined the canon: CCC 120.
- ✦ The events in the Old Testament are deliberately designed to prepare for and declare in prophecy about the Christ: CCC 122.
- ✦ Peter explains in his first sermon that the death of Christ was part of God's plan: CCC 599.
- ✦ Pentecost is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: CCC 731.
- ✦ The end-time in which we live is the age of the outpouring of the Spirit: CCC 2819.



| *St. Peter preaching*, by Pedro Serra (active 1363-1399), tempera on panel, 125x101 cm / De Agostini Picture Library / G. Dagli Orti / Bridgeman Images

Small Group Discussion

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What signs in Acts 2 show us that Peter plays the role of the leader of the apostles? Cite specific evidence.



2. Explain the structure of Peter's speech in Acts 2. How many parts does it have? What is the function of each part?

3. Discuss the sequence of virtues mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 1:5–7. Peter says, "If these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 8). How can studying the Scripture make these things "ours" and make them abound?

4. What signs are given in 2 Peter 1 that there is an oral tradition of teaching about Jesus, as well as that which is or would come to be written down (the "New Testament")? Cite specific evidence.

5. Why does Peter need to insist "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" (2 Pt 1:20)? What does he mean? What error is he concerned to deny?

**LIFE APPLICATION**

1. What do you hope to learn by studying the Gospel of Mark? What preconceived thoughts do you have about this particular Gospel? What did you know about Mark before embarking on this course?

2. How does the Gospel of Mark being an account of Peter's witness to Christ change how you see this Gospel?

3. Mark's Gospel is known for its simplicity. How can this simplicity help draw us to Jesus and help us better understand his life and teachings? How does simplicity aid our spiritual life in general?



Voices of the Saints

In all these books [among the canon of Sacred Scripture recognized by the Church] those who fear God and are of a meek and pious disposition seek the will of God. And in pursuing this search the first rule to be observed is, as I said, to know these books, if not yet with the understanding, still to read them so as to commit them to memory, or at least so as not to remain wholly ignorant of them. Next, those matters that are plainly laid down in them, whether rules of life or rules of faith, are to be searched into more carefully and more diligently; and the more of these a man discovers, the more capacious does his understanding become. For among the things that are plainly laid down in Scripture are to be found all matters that concern faith and the manner of life—to wit, hope and love. . . . After this, when we have made ourselves to a certain extent familiar with the language of Scripture, we may proceed to open up and investigate the obscure passages, and in doing so draw examples from the plainer expressions to throw light upon the more obscure, and use the evidence of passages about which there is no doubt to remove all hesitation in regard to the doubtful passages. And in this matter memory counts for a great deal; but if the memory be defective, no rules can supply the want.

—St. Augustine, *De Doctrine Christiana*

Life Application Video

After breaking from your small group discussion, gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Patrick Winslow.

How Then Shall We Live?

Silently review the following summary of Fr. Winslow’s reflection to prepare you for answering the calls to action found in the “Living It Out” section.

Mark’s Gospel can sometimes seem forgotten. Due to its brevity, it is not quoted as much or seen in the liturgy as much as the work of the other three evangelists. Yet it is precisely this brevity, this simplicity, found in Mark’s Gospel that can draw us back to the heart of Christ.

Our lives today are anything but simple. Do you ever stop in the midst of work demands, car-pool, sports schedules, home repairs, doctor’s visits, yard work, school activities, weather concerns, hectic family “vacations,” paying bills, and watching the bitter and often tense news cycles and think to yourself, “I just need a minute of peace”?

Studying the Gospel of Mark can’t take away all your headaches and responsibilities, but it does have a simple and direct style that strips away the barnacles of earthly stress and draws us back to what really matters: Jesus.

MARK: THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE EYES OF PETER

We must stop in the midst of our hectic days to remember the life of Christ. If we stay grounded in his teachings, all the stress we take on is put into perspective. We see that all these things, while perhaps important in some ways, pale in comparison to our relationship with our Savior. And the best way we can nurture that relationship is by coming back to his life and teachings.

We must also rely on the Church. She is that safe ark that guides us over the stormy seas of life. Mark's Gospel is seen as Peter's account of the life of Christ, and as our first pope, we see in this "rock" the steadiness and guidance we can find in Holy Mother Church. With our Church, and with Jesus Christ, we can calm any storms that sweep over us and find the peace we all yearn for.



| Photo by Ant Kim / Shutterstock

Living It Out

On your own, spend three to five minutes praying, discerning, and writing down the specific ways that God might be calling you to make changes in your life. Share and discuss afterwards only if you feel comfortable doing so.

Consider this week how God is calling you to . . .

- ✦ Take an area of your life that has become complicated and find a way to simplify it by bringing it to Jesus.
- ✦ Pray specifically for the pope as he fulfills the duties of his office, which are often so difficult for one man to uphold.
- ✦ Pick a specific scene from the life of Christ and meditate on it deeply, using this meditation to draw you closer to Jesus and understand his boundless mysteries.



Words to Know

Pentecost: The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the gathered apostles fifty days after the Resurrection; the word *pentecost* is from the Greek for fifty.

Hades: Not the everlasting fire of punishment for the devil and his angels, called Gehenna, but rather a kind of spiritual holding place, a “limbo,” for the souls of the deceased prior to Our Savior’s liberating death.

Scripture: Inspired writings, which, for the very early Christians, consisted solely of the Old Testament writings, before other writings were recognized as “canonical” by the Church.

Self-control: The ability to carry out consistently and effectively what one knows to be right, especially in the face of inducements to the contrary.

Corruption (of the body): The falling apart of the body and its suffering decay as a result of death; many saints, in testimony of their sanctity, have shared in the incorrupt character of Christ’s body, and their bodies remain free from decay after death (for example, St. Bernadette of Lourdes).

Prophecy: Strictly, to speak the word of God authoritatively, although, because God alone knows the future, the term is often used to mean specifically speaking God’s word about what will take place in the future.

Closing Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.