

3rd SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - B- 2006
“Dare to Dream”

St. Mark’s account of the gospel reads like a mystery. The people constantly try to figure out who Jesus is. It reminds me of the old **Lone Ranger** stories when someone says, after the bad guys have been brought to justice, *“Who was that masked man, anyway?”* Even the disciples of Jesus can’t seem to figure out who Jesus is. It takes a centurion at the foot of the cross to finally reveal the answer. *“Truly, this man is the son of God.”* Yet, while Mark writes his gospel with a sense of mystery, he would not sell many copies of his book as a *“who-done-it?”* because he tells us the answer to the mystery in the very first line of his gospel; *“The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*

Mark is like the little child who knows a secret and can’t wait to tell us what it is. *“Daddy, we’re having a secret birthday party for you.”* And in today’s passage Mark even reveals the key to understanding the plot of his gospel.

*“This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent, and believe the gospel.*

The rest of Mark’s sixteen chapters serve to unravel the meaning of these verses. But these verses tell us something critical. Unlike a mystery story we read for enjoyment and to pass the time, reading Mark’s gospel asks to respond. It asks us to repent and to believe.

To repent means more than to change the pattern of our behavior. It calls us to change our patterns of thought. It asks us to change the way we see our world. It calls us to dream about new possibilities. You see, the people of Jesus’ day had little reason to dream. Their lives were pretty much hopeless. They were caught in the oppressive forces of history, politics, culture and economics. If they were poor, they would remain poor. If they

were powerless, they would remain powerless. The system could crush them, and often did. Jesus wasn't telling them just to be more moral, to keep the commandments better, he was telling them to dream of new possibilities. The very idea that they could even dream of something new had to blow them away.

And for Mark, to believe means more than accepting that what Jesus says is true. By faith, Mark means for us to live as if the possibilities the message Jesus proclaims are capable of being realized. That is to say, to have faith is to believe your dreams can come true. And the reasons your dreams can come true is because the kingdom of God is at hand. For St. Mark it's here! Breaking into this corrupt world of violence, power and oppression is something totally new. It is the very love of God that had existed for all eternity. In the person of Jesus, the Son of God, a new power is at work in the world as never before; a new kind of force to be reckoned with; a new way seeing reality; a new vision of life, a new vision of death, a new way of loving; a new hope for everyone.

Mark is not asking his readers to be timid in their dreams, but to be bold. We are called to embrace the age-old hopes and dreams of the human race since the fall of Adam and Eve. We are to dream visions worthy of the prophets by visualizing a world without injustice, without racism, without sexism, without bigotry, without greed, without violence, without war. We can dare to dream dreams of a healed Christianity, where we are once again one in Christ, so the world may believe. We can dare to dream of a world where there is understanding among the world's religions rather than suspicion and even hatred. And the reason we can dare to dream such dreams is because God has entered the human struggle in the person of Jesus, and that Jesus has poured out his Spirit upon all who believe. Mark asks us to live our dreams.

Today, January 22nd, the 33rd anniversary of the infamous Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision that made the United States the most liberal country in the world when it comes to abortion, we can even dream of a day when the weakest among us will be respected and protected as fellow members of the human race. But even if Roe v Wade is overturned, it will not end abortion in the U.S. It will be up to the individual states to decide what they want to do, and Washington State will probably continue with abortion on demand. It was the law here before Roe v Wade. The battle lines will still be drawn. Demonstrations and name calling will continue. The abortion problem will only come to an end when we become a people who dare to dream bold dreams born of God's love at work in our lives.

Of all the talk about a woman's right to choose and to have control over her own body, there is one thing a woman dare not do if she is planning to have an abortion. She dares not dream dreams for her child. To me, this is one of the most simple reasons to question the morality of abortion. It is out of sync with nature. What mother here did not dream dreams for your child when you learned you were pregnant? And once you began to dream those dreams, you embraced your child long before its birth, and you even started to orient your life around your child. You couldn't help it. And from what I can gather, that unique mother-child bond never ends. It is natural, the way humans are made. What could possibly be more important than dreaming dreams for your child?

When Jesus came to live with us, only the powerful few dared to dream anything, for themselves or for their children. Jesus came to change that. He came that we all may have life and have it in abundance. He invited us all to move out of a world of fear into a world of possibilities. Jesus came to transform our hearts. May the Eucharist we now celebrate continue that transformation.