

Did you notice I added a line to the end of the Gospel-passage? Mark ends his Gospel with the scene at the empty tomb, the man in white and the women. The way we hear the passage as printed in the Mass books sounds joyful because we know how the story continues. But Mark actually concludes with what appears to be a depressing, doleful final verse. “The women said nothing to anyone because they were afraid”. The final word is a preposition which in Greek is a strange and syntactically awkward way to end a sentence and a brutal way to conclude a whole work.

Mark's Greek is not the smoothest, but he is a talented story-teller, as some of us experienced, hearing the Gospel in its totality last week. It is not an accident that Mark ends his Gospel in this way as some have proposed. It is not damage to the manuscript as some have surmised, even adding two versions of 'improvements' to make a better ending. No, Mark knew what he was doing in his abrupt full-stop. It was actually a clever way of doing what we might do with three full stops; or by adding a note: 'to be continued - by you, the reader'.

Mark when he is writing knows that the Church has developed and endured its first persecution, the murderous attacks on Christians by Nero, making them the scapegoats after the great fire of Rome. If the women indeed said nothing to anyone out of fear then nothing should have developed. All should have fizzled out after that Sunday morning's unspoken events. But the Word of God is all powerful and cannot be silenced even if fear means that people do not speak.

Mark's opening words are, “The beginning of the Good News...”. His whole Gospel is only a beginning. It is to be continued, and God's power will ensure that the story will continue.

What is our role? Throughout the Gospel Jesus has repeated the command to take the lowest place, be a servant, for the last will be first. Imitate himself who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. Our role is to serve one another as he served us.

We began these holy three days with the washing of feet; the message of that action is also the message of the Resurrection: I your Lord and Master have done this for you and now you must do the same for each other if you are to be my disciples.

We proclaim the power of the Resurrection in our service of one another in his name.