

**COME TO THE FEAST**  
**BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS**  
**ON THE EUCHARIST**

St Mark's Gospel

# Programme

- ▶ Who were the “Markan” Christians? (Mark 13)
- ▶ Insiders, outsiders and novelty (Mark 2:1-3:6)
- ▶ Feeding the 5000 (Mark 6:32-7:23)
- ▶ Feeding the 4000 (Mark 8:1-21)
- ▶ The Lord’s Supper (Mark 14:22-25)
- ▶ **Lessons for today’s church**



# Sequence

- ▶ From the Lord's Supper to the Eucharist
- ▶ The context of Mark
- ▶ Reading Mark
- ▶ Lessons for today's church
- ▶ The (dreaded) further reading



# From the Lord's Supper to the Eucharist

- ▶ The Lord's Supper — the Eucharist
  - > Jesus: prophetic gesture
  - > Disciples: memorial / zikkron
  - > Handed on (1 Corinthians 11)
  - > Celebrated / re-interpreted over time
  - > The "big" picture



# The Context of Mark

- ▶ The context of Mark
  - > Josephus
  - > The times...
  - > Follow me...discipleship
  - > Who is "in" and who is out?
  - > Who is Jesus?



(6.1.1) Thus did the miseries of Jerusalem grow worse and worse every day, and the seditious were still more irritated by the calamities they were under, even while the famine preyed upon themselves, after it had preyed upon the people. (6.1.1) And indeed the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another, was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench, which was a hindrance to those that would make sallies out of the city and fight the enemy: but as those were to go in battle-array, who had been already used to ten thousand murders, and must tread upon those dead bodies as they marched along, (6.1.1) so were not they terrified, or

did they pity men as they marched over them; nor did they deem this affront offered to the deceased to be any ill omen to themselves; (6.1.1) but as they had their right hands already polluted with the murders of their own countrymen, and in that condition ran out to fight with foreigners, they seem to me to have cast a reproach upon God himself, as if he were too slow in punishing them; for the war was not now gone on with as if they had any hope of victory; for they gloried after a brutish manner in that despair of deliverance they were already in. (War 6:1–4)



She then attempted a most unnatural thing; (6.3.4) and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, "O, thou miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve thee in this war, this famine, and this sedition? (6.3.4) As to the war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives, we must be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us:—yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. (6.3.4) Come on; be thou my food, and be thou a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews." (6.3.4) As soon as she had said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate the one half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed. (6.3.4) Upon this the seditious came in presently, and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her, that they would cut

her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied, that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. (6.3.4) Hereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, "This is mine own son; and what hath been done was mine own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! (6.3.4) Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half, let the rest be reserved for me also." (6.3.4) After which, those men went out trembling, being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. (War 6:204–212)



(6.8.5) So they now left these towers of themselves, or rather they were ejected out of them by God himself, and fled immediately to that valley which was under Siloam, where they again recovered themselves out of the dread they were in for a while, and ran violently against that part of the Roman wall which lay on that side; (6.8.5) but as their courage was too much depressed to make their attacks with sufficient force, and their power was now broken with fear and affliction, they were repulsed by the guards, and dispersing themselves at distances from each other, went down into the subterranean caverns. (6.8.5) So the Romans being now become masters of the walls, they both placed their ensigns upon the towers, and made joyful acclamations for the victory they had gained, as having found the end of this war much lighter than its beginning; for when they had gotten upon the last wall, without any bloodshed, they could hardly believe what they found to be true; but seeing nobody to oppose them,

they stood in doubt what such an unusual solitude could mean. (6.8.5) But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses wither the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; (6.8.5) and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine; they then stood in a horror at this sight, and went out without touching anything. (6.8.5) But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men's blood. (War 6:401–406)



# Reading Mark

## ▶ Reading Mark

> History

> Narrative

> Catechesis / theology

> Spirituality



# Lessons for today's church

- ▶ The times...
  - > Faith, fissure and future
  - > Anti-God
  - > Christianophobia
  - > And yet...



# Lessons for today's church

▶ The times...

- > Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. Vatican II (SC 1.1.10)
- > Triangle: Meditation + lectio + Sacrament



# Lessons for today's church

- ▶ Eucharist is...
  - > Proclamation of the reign of God
  - > Hospitality, compassion and healing
  - > Prophetic action
  - > Living memorial
  - > Participation in the paschal mystery
  - > Creating and empowering community



# Lessons for today's church

▶ And ourselves?

> Pure and impure, *then and now*

> Christ—discipleship—belonging—Eucharist

> Sacrament *and Word* inseparably

> In practice, how would that look?



# Further Reading



Bobertz, Charles A., *The Gospel of Mark. A Liturgical Reading*,  
(978-0801035692)



Byrne, Brendan, *A Costly Freedom. A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel*,  
(978-0814618561)



Cuvillier, Élian, *Evangelo secondo Marco* (978-8882273439) *L'Évangile de Marc*  
(978-2227470798)

Malbon, Elizabeth S., *Hearing Mark: A Listener's Guide*, (978-1563383793)



Malbon, Elizabeth S. *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel*,  
(978-0664222550)



Pagola, José A., *Following in the Footsteps of Jesus. Meditations on the Gospels for Year B*, (978-1934996270)

