

# EP THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. 40 MARK 16

The women who witnessed Jesus' Crucifixion went after the Sabbath to anoint His body with spices. This anointing was an act of love: while Jews did not embalm corpses, they did put spices on the bodies of their deceased loved ones to reduce the smell of bodily decay. St. Mark is the only writer to record their conversation about moving the stone from the front of the tomb: they probably did not know that the tomb had been sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:62-66). The young man who met the women at the tomb gave them the announcement that is a central part of the Church's Paschal services: "He is risen!" He further told the women to announce this to the Disciples; by specifically mentioning St. Peter, the young man demonstrated God's forgiveness of St. Peter's denial of Him.

St. Mark very briefly summarizes Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to St. Mary Magdalene (recorded in greater detail in Luke 24:1-11 and John 20:11-18), and two men on the road to Emmaus (recorded in greater detail in Luke 24:13-35).

We are of course struck by the miracle of the risen Christ appearing and speaking to people, but pay attention to a special point St. Mark makes in vv. 11 and 13: those people who had not yet seen Jesus did not believe He was risen. The unbelief that plagued the Disciples throughout Jesus' ministry flared up intensely after His capture and death. Blessed Augustine explains:

*When [Jesus] was with them before His passion, He had foretold all — that He would suffer, that He would die, that He would rise again on the third day — He had predicted it all; but His death was*

*as a loss of memory for them. They were so disturbed when they saw Him hanging on the Cross that they forgot His teaching, did not look for His Resurrection, and failed to keep His promises in mind.*

It is for this reason that Jesus chastised the Disciples for their unbelief in v. 14.

St. Mark also condenses the accounts of the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:44-49. While the term "Great Commission" generally refers to the passage in Matthew, its meaning is clearly seen here: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (v. 15). Fr. Constantine Nasr explains the Great Commission:

*The Great Commission was not given only to the disciples then: it was given and will continue to be given to the shepherds of His Church, to the Patriarchs and Bishops, to the Priests, to go and preach to all the nations. I firmly believe that every person who confesses Christ and follows Christ and works for Christ is a missionary worker who complements and enhances the work of the shepherd. In fact, the shepherd, whether he is a Patriarch, Bishop or Priest, needs co-workers, men and women of God in the Church.*

St. Mark concludes his Gospel account by quoting Jesus' teaching regarding the need for baptism, as well as the fact that God will empower Christians to accomplish His purpose in the world. Finally, Jesus' Ascension is depicted, with the final note that the Disciples then "went out and preached everywhere."

## A QUICK TIP FOR YOUR LIFE

### EVANGELIZE

The Orthodox Church in America gives several suggestions for engaging in evangelism:

**Among family and friends —** Talk to them about your experience in church, invite them to go to church with you, and pray for them.

**In your local community —** Help your parish, get involved in charitable activity, be unafraid to live out and witness to your faith in school, in sports, or with friends.

**In your country or across the globe —** Support the Church's mission communities, or go on a mission or service project trip.

