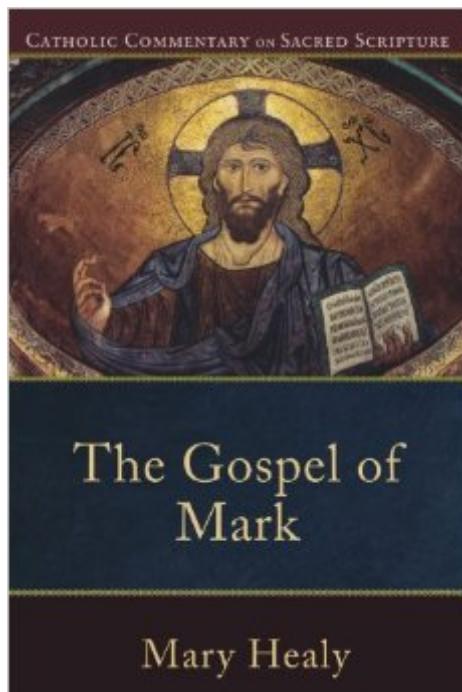


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The Gospel Of Mark (Catholic Commentary On Sacred Scripture)



Synopsis

There is an increasing hunger among Catholics to study the Bible in depth and in a way that integrates Scripture with Catholic doctrine, worship, and daily life. In October 2008, a meeting of the world Synod of Bishops scheduled by Pope Benedict XVI will focus on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church." Coinciding with that meeting is the launch of the Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (C.C.S.S.), a series that responds to the desire of Catholics to access the living Word of God. The Gospel of Mark is the first of seventeen volumes, which will cover the entire New Testament. Written by trusted Catholic biblical scholars, these commentaries interpret Scripture in the light of Catholic tradition. Accessibly written yet substantive, the C.C.S.S. fills a gap in the available literature by offering commentaries that cover more than brief study guides but are less daunting than scholarly commentaries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As described in the Editors' Preface, "The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture aims to serve the ministry of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church." For the Church in America, this series of commentary is both relevant and timely. As lay persons take on more active roles within the life of the Church, the need for accessible sources of catechesis is great. It has been my experience that the commentaries available are either simplistic or highly scholarly. What is needed are documents that help us understand what the original authors meant, what the Church has

taught regarding these scriptures, and what it means in the living Church today. The Catholic Commentary is designed to do just this. For me, it is in the design of the commentaries that most effectively communicates. First, the biblical text is grouped based on subject. For example, Mark 10:13-16 is grouped and labeled as "The Blessing of the Children." Immediately following the text, the authors present a List of References which includes Catechism paragraphs, and other Scriptural cross references relative to the grouped subject. This is very helpful since both scripture and Tradition are referenced in one convenient location grouped around a biblical theme. This alone is worth the price of the book for those of us who want to understand the teachings of the Catholic Church in light of Holy Scripture. To further illuminate the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, the authors have designed their manuscript to include "sidebars". These sidebars insert brief articles relative to topics in their commentary section. These articles are titled either Biblical Background or Living Tradition. The Biblical Background sidebar provides historical evidence regarding persons, places, things, etc. For example, a brief narrative regarding the Sea of Galilee is inserted in the commentary on The Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41). The Living Tradition inserts will provide reflections on the biblical text from early Church Fathers, Catechism, etc. Again, the authors' ability to effectively communicate to the lay person is successful due in part to the design of this manuscript layout. All of the Living Tradition and Biblical Background sidebars are indexed by subject so they can be easily located. Following the List of References is the commentary itself. Thankfully, the commentary is not written for the authors' peers, but rather for the common person. The authors claim that the commentary is designed to "focus on the meaning of the text for faith and life." For me, they have accomplished their goal. Following the Commentary section of the passage is a section titled "Reflection and Application." This narrative attempts to crack open the word and shed light on life and meaning today. I would think that this section will provide a wealth of ideas for small group discussions. The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture should enjoy wide popularity. It is written for the person who wants to understand scripture in light of the teachings of the Church with reflections relevant to Parish life. I have the complete Navarre Bible, but it has just been superseded by the superior Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture.

This commentary is much more than an academic commentary. The references to the Catechism of the Catholic Church; its succinct 'reflection and application' paragraphs; its cross referencing with the OT and NT, give a variety of opportunities for greater reflection. The Biblical Background boxes are invaluable for understanding the *Sitz in Leben*, the cultural background of the time, and the

quotations from the Fathers of the Church entitled 'Living Tradition' provides continuity of teaching throughout the ages. There is so much more, anyone can read it and grow in faith. And it's still academic.

I've read a couple of bible commentaries and flipped through several more, trying to find one that is comprehensive and informative. However, most end up simply restating the biblical text in different words with little insight provided. Healy's commentary on the Gospel of Mark is, I am happy to say, extremely informative, going far beyond the text at hand and connecting that particular text to the context of the history of the times, as well as to other provisions of scripture, both Old and New Testaments. The difficulty in reading any book of the Bible is that, 2000 years later, we inevitably read it in isolation, rather than from the perspective of the times. As such, things often go right over our head. What would have been obvious to a Second Century reader is not even thought relevant by us today. Healy gives us that much-needed context, throwing light on aspects of the Gospel that we otherwise do not see. (For example, I did not realize, simply from reading the Gospel itself, how much time Jesus spent in territories that were either Gentile or mixed. I did not realize that He had carried His ministry into present-day Jordan and up near if not into Syria.) On another note, if you are familiar with their writings, you will definitely see the influence of John Paul II and Benedict on Healy. I hope that the rest of the series is as good, although I am disappointed that they will apparently take a while to be published.

I used this book in my parish's Bible study group when we spent about 10 weeks on the Gospel of Mark. It is a co-ed group of adults ranging in age from early 40's to early 80's. Overall, the reaction was quite positive and it was refreshing to find a Catholic commentary that was both scholarly and readable. I asked the group to rate the commentary and 15 of the members filled out my rating form. A theme running through the comments of those who rated the book was that it was easy to read and that Mary Healy made Mark's gospel easier to understand. A couple of people thought the commentary was too repetitive. One person thought the commentary's treatment of the exorcisms performed by Jesus was troubling because the book kept emphasizing that demons are real and gave the impression that each of the exorcisms in the gospel involved a person who was truly possessed by the devil. Two of the people who rated the book complained about the quality of the production, pointing out that the material printed in the grey boxes was extremely difficult to read. Several members of the group were grateful that the author of the commentary consistently tried to help readers see how the gospel might be applied in our daily lives.

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