

Dear Friend

We are spoilt for choice when choosing a Saint to talk about this week. I could decide to write about St Mark for today, St George on Tuesday and then there's also Christine Rosetti and Catherine of Sienna towards the end of the week, all of whom could make for interesting reading. For no particular reason, except that the festival falls today, I have chosen to write about St Mark.

Mark the Evangelist is the person who is traditionally ascribed to be the author of the Gospel of Mark. According to Church tradition, Mark founded the episcopal see of Alexandria, which was one of the five most important sees of early Christianity. His feast day is celebrated on April 25, and his symbol is the winged lion.

According to William Lane (1974), an "unbroken tradition" identifies Mark the Evangelist with John Mark, and John Mark as the cousin of Barnabas. However, Hippolytus of Rome in *On the Seventy Apostles* distinguishes Mark the Evangelist (2 Tim 4:11), John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37), and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (Col 4:10; Phlm 1:24). According to Hippolytus, they all belonged to the "Seventy Disciples" who were sent out by Jesus to disseminate the gospel (Luke 10:1ff.) in Judea.

Peter, having been arrested by Herod Agrippa I, was saved miraculously by angels, and escaped out of the realm of Herod (Acts 12:1–19). Peter went to Antioch, then through Asia Minor (visiting the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, as mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1), and arrived in Rome in the second year of Emperor Claudius (AD 42). Somewhere on the way, Peter encountered Mark and took him as travel companion and interpreter. Mark the Evangelist wrote down the sermons of Peter, thus composing the Gospel according to Mark (*Eccl. Hist.* 15–16), before he left for Alexandria in the third year of Claudius (AD 43).

In Acts 15:39, we are told that Mark went to Cyprus with Barnabas after the Council of Jerusalem.

According to tradition, in AD 49, about 19 years after the Ascension of Jesus, Mark travelled to Alexandria and founded the Church of Alexandria – today, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria, and the Coptic Catholic Church trace their origins to this original community. Aspects of the Coptic liturgy can be traced back to Mark himself. He became the first bishop of Alexandria and he is honoured as the founder of Christianity in Africa.

His death is not clearly recorded. He may have been dying when he was succeeded by Anianus as the bishop of Alexandria in AD 62–63. However, later Coptic tradition says that he was martyred in AD 68.

Mark is remembered in the Church of England and in much of the Anglican Communion, with a Festival on 25 April.