

# **The Apostles Feast**

## **St. Mark**

### **Founder of the Church of Alexandria**

St. Mark was born in the city of Cyrene in Pentapolis, the western part of Libya. He was born of Jewish parents, Aristopolus and Mary, many years after the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His parents educated him with Greek and Hebrew and he was brought up in a cultural environment studying the Old Testament at a young age. His family lived in Cyrene until they were attacked by some barbarians and lost their property, where they then came to Jerusalem. St. Mark's family was religious, his cousin was St. Barnabas, his father's cousin was St. Peter, and his mother, Mary, played an important part in the early days of the Church in Jerusalem. Mark was always associated with the Lord, Who chose him as one of the seventy.

One Day Aristopolus and his son Mark were walking near the Jordan river when they encountered a lion and lioness. Aristopolus thought that this would be the end for both of them. Mark assured his father that Jesus Christ would save them, and Mark began to pray. The Lord heard his prayer and the two beast fell dead. As a result of this miracle, the father believed in Christ and was baptized by St. Mark.

St. Mark accompanied St. Peter on his missionary journeys inside Jerusalem and Judea. He then accompanied SS. Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel in Antioch, Selucia, Cyprus, Salamis, and Perga Pamphylia. However, for some reason St. Mark left them and returned home (Acts 13:13). On the next trip, St. Paul refused to take St. Mark with him because he left them on first trip. St. Barnabas then traveled with St. Mark to Cyprus where St. Barnabas departed in the Lord and St. Mark buried him.

After the departure of St. Barnabas, St. Mark went to Africa. This is where St. Mark's real work was. St. Mark traveled to Pentapolis, his birthplace, where he preached and performed miracles. He then traveled to Egypt and entered Alexandria in 61 A.D. On his arrival, a strap of his sandal was loose. He went to a cobbler named Anianus to get it fixed. While Anianus was repairing St. Mark's shoe, an awl (small- pointed tool) pierced his finger. Anianus cried out saying, "O One God". This astonished St. Mark and miraculously healed the man's wound. Afterwards, St. Mark started talking to Anianus about our Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for mankind. This is when Anianus accepted the faith and invited St. Mark to his house, along with his family and neighbors. St. Mark baptized all those who believed.

St. Mark established a theological school in Alexandria and a system for the Divine Liturgy known today as the Divine Liturgy of St. Cyril. The Christian faith grew and prospered in Egypt,

and St. Mark then ordained a bishop, three priests and seven deacons to look after the congregation if anything befell him.

St. Mark left Alexandria and went to Rome to meet with St. Peter and St. Paul, and he stayed with them until their martyrdom in 64 A.D. Upon returning to Alexandria in 65 A.D., St. Mark found his people firm in faith and visited Pentapolis, where he spent two years preaching and performing miracles, adding more to the faith. He then finally returned to Alexandria where he was overjoyed to find that Christians had multiplied so much that they built a huge church in the suburban district of Baucalis.

In the year of 68 A.D., Easter fell on the same day as the Serapis feast. A mob of heathens gathered in the Serapis temple at Alexandria and then attacked the Church filled with Christians celebrating the glorious Feast of Resurrection at Baucalis. St. Mark was seized and dragged with a rope through the main streets of the city. They continued dragging him with cruelty and his flesh was torn and scattered and the ground of the city was covered with his blood. They then cast him into a dark prison. The angel of the Lord then appeared to him and told him, "O Mark, the good servant, rejoice for your name has been written in the book of life, and you have been counted among the congregation of the saints." The Lord then appeared to Mark and gave him peace and Mark's soul rejoiced and was glad.

The following morning the pagans took St. Mark and tied his neck like they did before and dragged him amongst the stones. St. Mark then delivered up his pure soul and received the crown of Martyrdom. His flesh was torn, and it was the pagan's intention to cremate his remains, but a severe storm blew and heavy rains fell and the pagans became scared and fled in fear. Christians stole his body and secretly buried him in a grave that they had engraved on a rock under the altar of the Church.

Sources: <https://st-takla.org/books/en/church/synaxarium/08-bermodah/30-baramouda-mark.html>