

Sunday Homily

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

21 FEBRUARY 2021

YEAR B

“Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’”

Mark 1:14-15

Illustration

A celebrated television newsreader some time ago provoked a national debate on what constitutes news. He remarked in a speech that news broadcasts focused too much on bad news, and not enough on good news. In the discussion which followed, many people talked about what exactly is news. Do we presume that news is when something out of the ordinary happens, so that the commonplace is not worthy of comment? Or is news the description of events, and a commentary on their significance for society? One critic of the newsreader said that deliberately to balance the good news and the bad news was to intervene to an unacceptable degree in the reporting of the world as it is. And anyway, who can say what is good news, and what is bad news? Tragedy aside, what is good news for one person or one country is often bad news for another.

Gospel Teaching

Christian good news is quite distinct. Today’s Gospel reading says that Jesus was proclaiming the good news from God. Jesus was proclaiming that God’s will for the world was being fulfilled. The kingdom of God, the reign of God in which people are reconciled to God and restored to right relationship with him, is being established even as Jesus speaks. So for the Christian, good news is news that recounts the building of the kingdom of God. This is the message of Christ. His good news is the good news from God, the only good news that is good for all people. As disciples gathered around him, and as they heard and understood what this good news was, and why it would transform their lives, Jesus would send them out in their turn to make known the good news to all people.

Application

How do we recognise good news from God? Jesus’ preaching of the good news was accompanied by forgiveness of sins and miracles of healing. The good news restores broken lives; it gives hope; it drives away fear; it promotes true peace; it is concerned for the well-being of others who cannot care for themselves; it is concerned with building up what is good, and destroying what is evil. The good news is centred on Jesus – he himself was and is the good news that he proclaimed. He did not just talk about God: he was God, he is God. He drew people to himself and they found life in him. That is our testimony too – when we

recognise God in our lives, when we respond to him and begin to relate to him, we will find life: life in all its fullness.

So our Christian life is to recognise the power of the good news; to see what it has done for us; to give thanks to God; and to bring other people to receive the news with joyful hearts. This may be by acting out the good news. It may be by speaking about God. It may be by our honest exploration of our faith with others. It may be by our prayer.

Proclaiming the good news involves us in it, and we become part of it: a people who are reconciled to God, speaking of a kingdom which we have glimpsed, and in which we long to live fully and completely. We are not all called to be celebrated speakers and preachers, though some of us may be. We are not all called to shout the Gospel from the rooftops and in the streets, though some of us may be. We are not all called to write eloquent articles about our faith, nor even to sell all we have and go to faraway places – though some of us may be. We are all called to live the life God has created us for, in living, dynamic relationship with him. In short, we are called to be ourselves, and we will truly find ourselves when we truly find God – our own good news.

Today is the first Sunday of Lent, and a good opportunity to reflect on our part in proclaiming good news. It is a good opportunity to reflect on the news our lives proclaim – are we telling only about ourselves, or are we telling the story of God's love, the good news of the Gospel?