

HOMILY – 2ND SUNDAY IN ADVENT – 10 DECEMBER 2017

When someone says “I’ve got good news for you”, it makes us listen in hope. It may be, “You’ve got the job” or “your test results have come back, you’ve got the all clear” or “your lottery numbers have come in – you’ve won a prize”. Good news keeps us going. It gives us hope and encouragement.

Today, St Mark tells us from the start, that Jesus Christ is Good News. That is what “Gospel” means – Good News. So much so that four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all proclaim the coming of our Saviour.

A ‘Saviour’ is quite different from a prophet. John the Baptist is the last prophet, with the coming of Christ, all prophecy is ended, the Good News, Christ, the Word Made Flesh, has arrived.

We are all very busy wrapping presents for Christmas but perhaps we should be wrapping ourselves in the Good News of Christ, holding onto the words of hope that come from God and living them out on a daily basis. Christ rescues us from falling into sinful ways.

Someone said to me recently that we need to hear more sermons about Hell. We can’t ignore ‘hell’. I think they have a point. A point of reference that when shut off from the power of the Gospel, life can descend into the realms of Hell. Hell is the total absence of good, joy and hope, in other words, total abandonment and despair, a sort of wilderness ending in death.

Whereas John the Baptist, comes back from the wilderness, a sort of hellish experience, mind you, I don’t know if eating locusts is all that bad, especially with honey!! And he tells us the Good News, that the Messiah has come.

What about you? Are you a messenger of Good News? Some people are sadly locked into despair, always complaining, seeing life through sad eyes, nothing seems to be good. Perhaps all they have known is anger, violence and even cruelty, a sort of hellish life. We can acquire, if we are not careful, a depressing vision of the world. The TV news giving us all the bad news first and a wee bit of good news at the end. Does that reflect the truth?

The thing is, Jesus Christ is fundamentally Good News. He comes to show us a way of life that is based on the commandment of love and the conclusion of that life of faithful love is salvation in the Kingdom of Heaven. That no human being is, while alive, beyond conversion and redemption. The losers, wasters and crooks of this world can be rescued from their hellish existence.

The Church, at its best, is the crucible, the meeting place of mercy and compassion. The healing point celebrated in the meal of Holy Communion. That every time we come to Mass it should be a ‘Good News’ experience. That every time we make an honest confession, it should be a ‘Good News’ experience. That every time we go away to a quiet place to pray, it should be a ‘Good News’ experience.

I will just finish with a wee story about Good News and bad news. Years ago, when in my first parish as an assistant priest, I took the car out in the snow, for a sick call. On the motorway, the car skidded and crashed. It was a write off. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt. When the parish priest returned from holiday, I said, ‘Do you want the Good News first or the bad news? The bad first he said, get it over with, I said “I’ve written off the parish car, the Good News is that you still have an assistant priest”.

More importantly, re Good news and bad news or bad news to good news, we will hear after Communion, the good work being done by the Scottish Society for Protection of the Unborn Child and how they are helping to save the lives of babies in the womb and challenge the political culture which is not pro-life.

God Bless them in their work.