

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
for he has anointed me
to bring Good News to the afflicted.”

These are the words of Jesus, spoken in the Synagogue in Nazareth. They are Breaking News. But Jesus’ words can be so familiar to us, that we run the risk of not paying attention to them.

Christianity is fundamentally Good News. But what is the Breaking News, the Good News today, for us, for you and me?

Any news, as Breaking or as Good as it may be, that has no bearing or import on one’s own circumstance in life, is of no relevance. It may be Good News, but it does not affect me!

For example, Fox News, or NBC, or CNN reports that flooding has subsided in Calcutta; that is indeed good news for the people who live there; but it has no real bearing or relevance for our life here in Bergen County. Or if a cure for cancer is discovered, we may be happy to hear that, but if I do not have cancer, it doesn’t really make much difference in my life. It’s good news for others, but not for me personally.

The news which Jesus brings is relevant for everyone, no matter who they are or where they live. But to receive this news, for this news to really be Good News, one has to be in a concrete existential situation. Without this awareness, without this consciousness, the news will have no bearing.

Good News will be announced in the Gospel at Mass today.

Jesus, the Gospel says, brings Good News “to the afflicted, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed”.

Having spoken those words, Jesus will sit down and continue: “This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening”.

While who is listening? Those in the synagogue of Nazareth 2000 years ago? Surely. But also, we who are sat in Our Mother of the Church at Mass today, January 23 and 24, 2016.

If he is addressing these words to us, Jesus obviously thinks that we are afflicted, blind, captive and oppressed. But do we think so?

Each one of us can ask ourselves: In which way am I afflicted? How am I blind? Of what am I captive or oppressed?

If we are sincere, we will see that there are many things that afflict us, many things to which we are blind, and in numerous ways are captive and oppressed. Not to recognize such would make the Gospel impotent, irrelevant, or at best a Breaking News for others, but certainly for us.

When we listen to the Gospel today, may each of us receive it for what it is – Good News. Receiving this Good News will change our life, from one situation to another.

The flood waters subside, a cure is found.

Fr. Sean