

Good news. I spoke with someone at the Pastoral Office the other day. In the course of our conversation, he shared that he had met his biological mother this past summer. I had not known that he was adopted. The experience has been wonderful and life-giving. Good news!

You become engaged and cannot wait to tell your family and friends. Good news! A parishioner mentioned recently that the spouse had the one-year check-up and was cancer-free. Good news!

You nervously open the envelope from the admissions office of the college you hope to attend and the letter says that you are accepted. Good news! You receive the phone call that says you are hired for the position that you sought. Good news.

These are all examples of good news (I could add so many more). We want to share good news and invite people to share in our joy. It is as natural as breathing.

We hear good news in today's readings. I quote from the prophet Isaiah, "Go up the high mountain, Zion, herald of glad tidings; cry out at the top of your voice, Jerusalem, herald of good news." What is the good news the prophet is proclaiming? That the sixty-year exile of Israel from her homeland at the hands of the Babylonians is coming to an end. Her punishment for infidelity is completed. Now they can go home. It will be a Second Exodus. The first was when Moses parted the Red Sea and the People of God walked on dry land from slavery to freedom. With poetic imagination, Isaiah describes what God will do to hasten their return – the mountains will be leveled, the valleys filled in, and the rough terrain made smooth.

John the Baptist is the herald of good news. He announces that one mightier than he is coming and that he is not worthy to loosen his sandal straps. John is announcing the coming of the long-awaited Messiah, the savior of Israel, the new King David, and the fulfillment of the words of the prophets. And the one coming after John will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Good News! We use that phrase a lot. Go forth and announce the Good News. Let us take a moment for a brief reflection. Someone walks up to you and asks, "What is this Good News that you Catholics are always talking about?" What would we say? How would we answer?

Do we really know what the Good News of Jesus Christ is all about? Have we been affected, changed by His Good News?

Growing up in the fifties in a Catholic household and attending a Catholic School, I remembering feeling close to Jesus. That experience continued through high school. Things began to change college when I entered the seminary. My faith became more intellectual and less relational because I was studying philosophy. Then I am in Rome studying theology. I do remember a retreat my first year there. I heard the Good News of Jesus afresh and felt a new fervor in my love for Jesus. Now it was fall semester of my last year in Rome, 1971. Some of us heard about a Life in the Spirit seminar. We decided to participate. At the introductory meeting, the speaker welcomed us and explained the purpose of the Seminar – to come to know more about the Holy Spirit and to have the opportunity to experience the Holy Spirit. He said that perhaps some of us present were feeling a dryness in our relationship with the Lord. At

those words, my spirit leaped. During and at the end of the seminar, I once again experienced a new ardor in my love for Jesus and a new fervor to grow closer to Him. And down through the years, I have found that renewing experiencing are needed in my life to keep to fire for the Lord burning.

We begin our seventh year of presenting Discovering Christ on Thursday, January 11th. I invite you to come. You will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. You will have the opportunity for that Good News to affect you and to change you.

The format of each of the seven evenings is simple. You enjoy a free meal. There is a little singing and prayer followed by a video presentation by either David Nodar or Fr. Eric Arnold. I have seen these teaching videos many times. Each time they are fresh. They are anointed teachings. I mean the Holy Spirit uses them to touch our minds and engage our hearts with the Good News of Jesus. David and Fr. Eric have been transformed by Christ Jesus and the Good News He brings to the human race. They are eager to share that Good News with you and me.

Next week, you will have an opportunity to register for Discovering Christ during Mass. If you have already enjoyed Discovering Christ, consider hearing the Good News of Jesus one more time. I invite you all to pray this week about your participation.

The first thoughts of some of us would probably be about the obstacles: the length of time (7 weeks) or your busy schedules or whatever. Give God the opportunity to show His greatness. Sign up and watch those obstacles to your participating – those mountains, valleys and rough terrain – be leveled, filled in and made smooth.