



**January 21, 2024**

**Third Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**Sunday of the Word of God**

*...Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God...*

**Mark 1:14**



Dear Friends;

In 1962 the world was in the depths of the cold war. The world was divided between the countries of the iron curtain and the democracies of the western world. In October of that year the Cuban Missile Crisis would bring the world to the brink of a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

That same October Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). In his opening address Pope John expressed hope that this meeting of the world's bishops would bless the Church with greater spiritual energies that the Church might *"look to the future without fear."* He criticized the culture warriors of that time. *"We sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to the voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much of discretion or measure."* The Pope called them *"Prophets of doom."*

Today the Gospel of Mark describes Jesus as *"proclaiming the good news of God."* He tells his listeners *"Time is up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe in good news!"* Jesus invites others to join him in proclaiming a message of freedom. He then embarks on a frenzy of healings and casting out demons that afflict people. His message is freedom and hope. He invites us to live the change that is the Shalom (Peace) of God. We must physically embody hope and healing.

Recently, in a class with our catechumens I was asked about confessions. One of the catechumens was nervous about the idea. I spoke about how after the Second Vatican Council the Church changed the approach to the sacrament. Previously the priest was to examine the penitent like a prosecuting attorney. Then acting as judge the priest would assign a penance that fit the crime.

After the Council the sacrament was revised. We called it *"Reconciliation."* This word literally means to be able to look again at someone in the eyes. The focus is healing what has been wounded by sin. The priest speaks the mercy of Jesus and reconciles the penitent to the Church. The focus is the love and mercy of God. I warned the class that there are a lot of priests who prefer the judgment model. Be careful to know what priest you go to confess. You wouldn't go to just any brain surgeon without first finding out about her.

Pope John divined that the Church needs to model its pastoral practice on the Good News that Jesus proclaims. The Pope said that the Catholic Church *"desires to show itself to be a loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward children separated from her,"* and *"she spreads everywhere the fullness of Christian charity, which nothing is more effective in eradicating the seeds of discord, nothing more efficacious in promoting concord, just peace, and the brotherly unity of all."*

Who do we want to be? A culture warrior, prophet of doom, judge, and jury? Or do we choose the path of Jesus and proclaim Good News? The path of loving-kindness, ministers of mercy, agents of reconciliation and peace, ambassadors of the kingdom of radical love? Our actions will speak for us. On this Sunday of the Word of God let us proclaim Good News!

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*