SO, WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS?

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.
What is the Good News that . . .

. . . motivated figures as different and as great as Mother Teresa and Vince Lombardi?

. . . propels missionaries all over the world to leave the comforts of home to share its message with strangers?

. . . leads some to give up family life in heroic service to the Church, while empowering others to commit to the generous, heroic love demanded by family life?

A profound gap exists in our lives and in our world. No matter what our religion, race, or location on the planet and whether we are rich, poor, or something in between, we all know this tension from experience: there’s a gap between what the world is and what we wish, hope, or believe it could be.

And if we’re honest, we likely feel the same tension deep within ourselves. On the one hand, I believe I am good and I have some things to offer this world. And yet I wish, or hope, or believe I could somehow become . . . better, happier, healthier, more peaceful, more loving, more effective.

More. Or less: less selfish, angry, anxious, busy, fearful, doubtful.

The gap between what we desire and what we experience is real.

In our efforts to confront the gap, we squelch our desire for a "better world" or a "better life." We lower our expectations, numb our pain, distract ourselves, or simply look the other way.

Of all the Catholic teachings, the doctrine of original sin is probably the easiest to build a case for. Just look around; it’s pretty clear that something is not right.

For Christians, “sin” is the broadest name we give this something that is not right. Sin causes many of the gaps in our lives and in our world. Sometimes, it is our own sins causing gaps in our lives and in the lives of others. Sometimes the sins of other people harm us.

One thing is certain: we all contribute, in some way, not only to what is good in this world, but also to what is broken, what is sinful. For “all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

All people experience the urge to put themselves, another person, or something else in the center of their lives, instead of God. This can wound our lives. While sin leads to wounds, wounds can also lead to sins. When we are hurting from wounds like abandonment, fear, shame, or hopelessness, we often turn to sin (rather than God) for comfort.

We may eat too much, drink too much, watch too much TV, binge on social media, escape into erotic or emotional fantasies, gossip about the wrongdoings of others, or strive desperately to prove our worth by attaining success or riches.

False comforts can distract us from our pain or bring quick relief, but they don’t bridge the gap. They only numb the pain for a bit.

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God has given us a remedy for all of our brokenness. It is called grace. The grace of God, which we find in a relationship with Jesus, can heal every wound, cleanse every stain, break every chain, and triumph over every darkness the world has ever known.

Grace is not a mere "thing" or "substance." It is not magic. Nor is it quantifiable. Grace is not so much an "it" or a "what" as a "Who." Grace is God’s gift of his very self to his creation.

Grace is the gift of God’s love poured out for us in big and small ways: from the ultimate gift of salvation to God the Father’s quiet ready response to our daily needs. Grace is God himself walking with us through it all.

When you are selfish and irritable, Jesus offers you his victory over this gap within yourself. Though you may feel too weak to fix yourself, Jesus offers his life and his grace to you.

This truth explains how St. Paul can proclaim in Ephesians 3:20-21:

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

What an amazing mystery: God longs to partner with us to bring more of his life into the world!

God’s "yes" to us is perfect; our "yes" to him is not yet perfect. But as we say "yes"—again and again—we are changed, and the gap is bridged through both grace and effort, over a lifetime of learning to say "yes."