

FAITH MATTERS

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THE GIFT OF THE GOSPEL

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On Saturday evening, you see your favorite performer at your favorite local venue. You've been looking forward to this concert, so you've invited your best friends and paid a premium for front-row seats. As soon as you hear the opening notes of your favorite song, you jump to your feet. You sing along. You don't want it to end, and you hope for an encore.

Then on Sunday morning you go to Mass, a little late but in time for the Gospel. You don't know anyone in the parish, so you slip into a back pew. You haven't looked at the readings, so as the Gospel is read, you try to figure out which one it is. You hear the opening words of a familiar story, maybe "The Prodigal Son" or "The Good Samaritan," and you think: *Old news. Heard this one before.* You sit back down thankful they used the short version, and you hope the priest or deacon who is about to preach will do the same with the homily.

These are two different events and two very different experiences. Why

do we memorize the words to our favorite songs but zone out when we hear a familiar Gospel? Why is it so easy for us to share the good news that the band is in town but difficult for us to share the Good News of what God has done for us in Jesus?

Recall what the proclamation of the Gospel is meant to be: a life-changing event. The Good News of Jesus when proclaimed and shared has the power to change everything, even the culture. The bold proclamation, the *kerygma*, is the truth that God has a plan for your life; that sin and its devastating consequences disrupt God's plan and rob you of joy; that God in his goodness sent his son, Jesus Christ, to save you by dying on the cross and rising from the dead; and that now, by accepting the gift of salvation and responding to God's call to grow in holiness and engage in mission, you can live a joyful life in the community of the Church.

The power that is unleashed when the Good News is heard is precisely





why we should prepare ourselves for a real encounter with the person of Jesus as the Gospel is proclaimed each Sunday. The Gospel has the same power as when it was first proclaimed by the Apostles: the power to free captives from slavery to sin, to set cold hearts ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit and to compel us forward to share the Good News.

PREPARE

SEEK OUT THE READINGS

It has never been easier to access the word of God. You can get daily and Sunday readings from any number of apps, podcasts, print media and websites. The U.S. Bishops' website, uscbb.org, is always a great place to start.

READ THE GOSPEL BEFORE SUNDAY

Read the Sunday Gospel ahead for the following Sunday early in the week. Name a certain grace you hope to receive as you read the word.

RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO SKIM

Avoid the urge to gloss over a reading that is familiar. God always has something more to say to us each time. The Gospel is the living, dynamic word — not dead, static letters on a page. From year to year as the Scriptures are read, the word does not change, but the word changes us, if only we allow it to!

PONDER

LISTEN FOR GOD'S VOICE

Spend time listening as you read

and pray. In the Scriptures, God speaks human language. Jesus tells stories. The Holy Spirit unlocks passages that seem confusing. Ask help from Our Lady, who pondered God's word and kept the things that happened to her and Jesus in her heart. It takes time and quiet to ponder.

PICTURE YOURSELF IN THE STORY

Place yourself in the scene as you read the Gospel. What do you see and hear? If you express yourself better through writing, continue the conversation with God in a journal.

PRAY FOR INSPIRED HOMILIES

Pray that your bishops, priests and deacons, as they prepare their weekly homilies, will be used by the Holy Spirit to deliver the word with power, conviction and love.

PROCLAIM

COMMIT IT TO MEMORY

Memorize a verse from the Gospel and share it with someone. Recite the verse in moments of temptation or despair.

SHARE THE GOSPEL

Think of someone each week with whom to share the message of the Gospel. Invite someone to attend Mass with you and read the Gospel with them to help them prepare.

STRENGTH TO EVANGELIZE

Pray for the courage to share a word of conviction to help someone in a difficult situation. Assure them that



God is speaking to them, too. Read the Gospel together and invite them to listen to what God has to say.

When Verdi's *Rigoletto* was set to premiere in 1851, the composer gave the sheet music for the famous aria "La donna è mobile" only to the tenor, making him swear not to share it or even whistle the melody. Despite this, the story goes that the next day the popular tune was heard up and down the streets.

We simply cannot keep beauty and joy to ourselves, and so it is with the

beauty and joy of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus is waiting to meet you as the word is proclaimed. He is waiting to bring joy to your life through the Good News of salvation by his cross and resurrection. It is time to unleash the Gospel in the Archdiocese of Detroit. It is time to pray that the tune catches on and that the Gospel might bring music to our ears and joy to our hearts.

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