



Bible Study Third Sunday of Lent Year A

St. Maria Goretti
and St. Peter Claver
Parishes

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Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. John 4:39-40 NABRE

Reading I: Exodus 17:3-7

A FAITH THAT SHOWS - LET ME TELL IT!

The number of Catholics in the United States is estimated at 68.1 million. According to the Catholic research agency, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, only 1 in 3 adult Catholics, mainly older women, attend Mass in any given week. Infant baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations and Marriages in the church are down from previous years. It is time to live our faith more openly.

This week, we continue with our Lenten theme of, "Lord Increase My Faith." We ask for a "Faith that shows." The image drawn from the readings are of the Sacrament of Baptism. This Bible study focuses on the fruit of the Sacrament of Baptism, that is, evangelization. The Sacrament of Baptism requires that we live a life that shows our faith to the world. If our faith permits us, we must tell others about the loving mercy of God. If other Christians are hesitant,



GIVE ME FAITH
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our spirit should say, *let me tell it*, and live a life that shows our faith in Jesus Christ.

In the first reading, the complaining of the Israelites showed a lack of faith. God had promised to supply their needs (v. 2), but they tested the Lord. They were impatient and refuse to wait for God to fulfill His promise to them. (See 1 Cor. 10:10). Moses was frustrated with the Israelites, but he took his problem to the Lord (v. 4). He had faith that all could see. He obeyed God's command by taking the symbol of God's authority, his staff (v. 5), as well as the elders, with him. The elders were to witness the miracle, since all of Israel could not see it. They would have to go and testify to these events. Relying on the assurance that God would be standing on the rock (v. 6), Moses struck the rock in view of the elders and God provided fresh water for Israel to drink. The water that flowed was a symbol of Baptism and the charge to live a faith that shows. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Identify three things that showed Moses' faith. How do you show your faith?

What is an Evangelist? Here is one definition.

A person authorized to proclaim the gospel of Christ. In a more narrow sense, the word refers to one of the gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Literally, however, the word means, "one who proclaims good tidings" (Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5). The evangelist was a gift of God to the early church (Eph 4:11). These persons were not attached to any specific local church. They traveled over a wide geographical area, preaching to those to whom the Holy Spirit led them. The early disciples were also called evangelists (Acts 8:4) because they proclaimed the gospel. All Christians today may continue the witness of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As the evangelists spoke and wrote of Jesus, so Christians may bring His message to others. (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Reading II: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

A FAITH THAT SHOWS - LET ME TELL IT!

The role of the evangelist is to preach the Gospel of Christ. In this reading, St. Paul encourages the Roman Christians to cherish the gift of the Christian faith and persevere in spite of adversity (v. 3). It is as though he cannot contain the Holy Spirit within himself and boasts of having been justified by faith and that he is at peace with God through Jesus Christ (v. 1-2). He is so filled with God's presence that he has to tell it.

In verses 1-11, St. Paul rejoices in the Christian experience of being at peace with God. He identifies three effects of finding peace with God. The effects of a right relationship with God are: peace (v. 1), confidence (v. 2) and a present share in the life of the risen Christ (v. 10). These effects are ever more spectacular when we realize that Jesus died for us when we were at our worse (v. 8). Because He so loved us, we can withstand persecution. St. Paul tells us, God loves us. He has given us a faith that shows, so let's go and tell the world about it. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Describe your response to God's love for you. Have you told anyone how much you love God? What was their reaction?

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Gospel: John 4:5-42

A FAITH THAT SHOWS -LET ME TELL IT! As

Christians, our lives should reflect our faith in Jesus Christ. This is how we build up the kingdom of God on earth. Our good works, performed in the Spirit of God, have great power to draw people to faith in Jesus the Christ. This is our command from our Baptism, to go and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ and bring others to Him. As part of our duty to evangelize, we must resolve that even if others will not proclaim the Gospel, then we should bravely step up and say; "let me tell it." Evangelization provides us with an opportunity to move from docile and weak faith to boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the way we live.

The Gospel this Sunday provides a unique look at evangelization and its effects. Because of the length of the Gospel, it is not possible to discuss the wonderful treasures that it contains in this space. However, here are some of the themes that compete for our attention in this Gospel reading: (1) Jesus' request for water and the dialogue with the Samaritan woman leads to the declaration that He is the Giver of Live. It is a reflection of the Sacrament of Baptism. (2) Jesus' suggestion that the woman call her husband exposes the woman's past. Some see this as a reference to the Samaritan Bible that has only five books of the Old Testament, while others see it as a challenge to her lifestyle. This is a reflection on the Sacrament of Matrimony. (3) The shift in the conversation to the racial and religious divide between Jews and Samaritans reveals that we are all called to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. This is a reflection on the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. (4) The declaration by the woman of her belief in a messiah prompts Jesus to reveal that He is the Messiah. (5) The woman's departure to fetch her friends to see Jesus is an example of how imperfect faith can be used by Jesus to call people to Him. (6) The discussion with the disciples lead to the revelation that Jesus lives to do His Father's will.

Verse 39 shows what God does with a little faith. Many of the people believed initially in Jesus because of the woman's verbal testimony. The Greek word for testimony means that she did not hold back anything. This is significant, because the conversation between Jesus and the woman involved her lifestyle. She brought her people to Jesus. God uses the witness of all types of people to bring others to faith in Him. The openness of these Samaritans contrasts sharply with the hostile reception Jesus received from some Jews. (See 1:11). It required considerable humility for these Samaritans to invite a Jewish rabbi to stay with them (v. 9). Because they invited Jesus in, they no longer needed to rely only on the witness of the woman. They received a personal encounter with Jesus the Christ. Then they too could say: Let me tell it! **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Who benefited from the woman's evangelization efforts?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read Eph 4:11. How do these words apply to you?

Tuesday

Read Romans 5:1-2, 5-8. Pray for priests, deacons, and teachers of the Gospel.

Wednesday

Read Ex. 17:3-7. With whom do you identify most in these verses?

Thursday

Read John 4:30-40. Tell someone about Jesus Christ this week.

Friday

Attend Mass and pray the Stations of the Cross.

Joy of the Gospel

"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord". The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace". How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost!"

From the Encyclical

Resources: John Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M. ; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 986-987; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.N.D. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 77-79; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html#The_joy_of_the_gospel;

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/how-catholic-are-us-catholics-it-s-all-how-you-measure>.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017