

## The Gift of the Faith

One time my mom asked me what my favorite gift was that I received growing up.

One that stood out was a 6-Band radio I got from Radio Shack. It allowed me to listen to out of town ballgames, but on other bands I could listen to short wave radio, and even pull in police frequencies too.

But on another level, what I loved with that radio were the memories of enjoying it with my grandfather. This being a long time before there was such a thing as satellite radio, we'd often listen to some of the out of town games together. He'd also share his stories of taking the train to go see Tiger Stadium or Wrigley Field with his brother Frank. The radio gave both of us a lot of enjoyment.

However on a deeper level, I'd have to say the greatest gift I've been given is seeing what the faith looks like in action by people like my grandpa Henry, and the other people who fill my life. For, in my life in so many ways others through their actions have revealed who God is by the way they've led their lives.

For instance my grandmother Pat is one of the most joyful people I've ever known. A woman of deep faith, what I remember the most about her was her constant joy. If she had a bad day, she wouldn't be one to complain about it. If you came to visit, she was happy to be with you. She'd greet people always with a smile and a hug. And talking to you you were the only person who mattered at that moment. I think of her often but especially at Christmas as many of my ornaments were made by her needle and thread.

There's my parents too, who from an early age taught me about God by taking me to Mass, praying with me, and explained the faith to me. But then I'd also look at how they would lead their lives. We'd go to Mass no matter how busy the week was. Both would work hard to provide for the family, and to keep up our home. They'd treat one another with love. And they would help out at the church and their own parents. And, much like grandma Pat, they would do it all with a positive attitude.

Even my grandpa Henry was a person of joy; he'd be smiling all the time, had a great sense of humor, and also had a deep faith praying faithfully every morning and evening.

This week in our Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist who are inquiring if He is the Messiah that they are to tell John what they hear and see; the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

This Gospel gives us a chance to think about the question how do we give the gift of the faith and testify to it through our words and actions?

Going to Mass is certainly part of our faith. And if you reading this column, odds are you went to Mass and got a bulletin. But on this Third Sunday of Advent where we light the

rose colored candle and rejoice as Christmas is nearing, there's a special focus on joy. The Christian joy of rejoicing in the Lord.

It's a good time to think about how we can radiate this joy in our lives.

For starters, we can think about what we have been blessed with by God in life. Sometimes we can focus on the negatives, but truly we have so much. If we count the blessings we have, we'll find that there is so much to be thankful for.

With that, if people know we are Catholic, can they tell it by how we live? For some going to Mass is like punching a clock; something they have to do but don't think much about. For others they would have no clue a person goes to Mass at all because the person is perpetually angry, gossipy, negative, cold or judgmental. We all have down days, but hopefully our relationship with God has an impact on our attitude so that people are attracted to the faith through our demeanor. A warm, positive attitude has a way of getting to people and transforming them too.

Lastly, hopefully our experience with God makes us want to share the faith too. By learning more about our faith and deepening our relationship with God, we should not fear talking about what we believe with others. Sometimes people misunderstand what the Church teaches, or attack the Church, and we can be fearful. Let's not forget John the Baptist was martyred for the faith. But the Christian faith did not spread through people keeping it hidden. It spread because people had the fortitude to tell others what they saw and heard through the power of the Holy Spirit. May we strive to never fear defending the faith and engaging others in discussions of what we believe and why. Whether it's people we know who are estranged from the Church, or taking the time to talk and pray with people about the faith, or even spending time with your children or grandchildren to help them understand the importance of Mass and getting to know God, we must strive to tell others what the faith is all about.

As we are reminded at the end of Mass, we have a job to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord and to be a witness to the faith. Hopefully we go to Mass because we want to grow closer to God, and what a great gift we are given in Jesus who dwells with us. Wrapping the packages we give is great, but what a great gift it would be to give someone a better relationship with God by not keeping our faith hidden, but sharing it through our words and actions over the course of our lives.

God's blessings on you and your loved ones this week!

Fr. Paul