

# DISCIPLES IN MISSION LIVE THE GOSPEL STORY



AS WE RECEIVED THE ASHES OF LENT ON OUR FOREHEADS, WE HEARD “REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.” THIS LENT, PERHAPS THESE WORDS CAN MEAN: “GET A NEW VISION AND BELIEVE IN GOD’S GOOD NEWS FOR YOU.” JESUS WANTS TO OFFER US HIS VISION AND ITS POWER TO CHANGE OUR LIVES.

## From Beginning to End

Nothing engrosses us like a good story. Even aside from the endless soap operas of daytime television, recent TV watchers have been treated to a whole array of multiple storytelling. The most popular shows all feature the technique of telling many stories concurrently.

Start with some compelling characters, who are very good, very mean, very driven, or very confused. Mix in some plots that put us on the edge of our seats, add some sentimentality or one or two trendy “morals,” and we find ourselves consumed by the show.

What drives a show for us is the story. And what drives the story is the *what then?* quality that all good stories have. The story begins—the patient isn’t feeling well—and we say, “What then?” The patient visits the doctor, and we ask, “What then?” We do this until the story concludes with some degree of satisfaction, and then we feel relief.

From beginning to end, the suspense piques our interest. “What then?” we keep asking.

## Gospel Story

For more than a century, we Catholics have been explicitly talking about salvation history, the story of salvation. Catechists and preachers point out that God’s relationship with humankind has been an unfolding drama, with *what then?* asked again and again.

The story encompasses all of human history, but it becomes most conscious and explicit in the story of revelation, the history of God’s involvement with Israel. As the characters of Israel come off the page—whether it’s trusting Abraham, loyal Ruth, royal David, or brave Judith—we keep wanting to know what comes next, where all this is leading.

For us Christians, it all leads to Jesus Christ, who brings the story of revelation to such a high point, to such a tension, that all of human history seems to hang on its telling.

In fact, the story of Christ, the stories of the Gospel, seem to contain all of history. Even today, when we read them, we feel ourselves inside them. As we stand on Sunday and the Gospel is read out loud, even if our minds wander now and then, we find ourselves caught up in the narration. What does

Jesus say to those who would trap him? What happens to the Apostles when they proclaim that Jesus is risen?

The bishops say in their statement *Go and Make Disciples*: “We all have—and are—stories of faith, for through the Spirit, the Gospel of Jesus Christ takes hold of us in the proclamation of his word, and Jesus touches us in the celebration of his sacraments. When this genuinely happens, we are all set ablaze...Being involved in the story of salvation is what faith is all about!” (p. 2).

## Our Story

When we hear the Scriptures read, we notice something else. Not only do we find ourselves caught up in the gospel story, we discover the power of the Gospel in our own personal stories.

The parables speak about us. We hear about the seed being scattered and we wonder about our own hearts and how deeply the Gospel has taken root in them. We hear

Jesus chide his disciples about their concern for security or money and we cringe inside. The Crucifixion is proclaimed and we grieve not only for Christ but for every injustice we have felt ourselves.

This means that the gospel story is our story as well. The Good News of God, proclaimed through Christian history, extends to our own time and our own lives. God intends us to be part of the story of Good News, the story of salvation. As we become part of that story, we are evangelized.

So we, as Christians, cannot avoid asking *what then?* about our own lives and the lives of those whom God has given us. The suspense continues, the drama unfolds: the story of our own redemption—or, God forbid, the story of our refusal of God’s love and the consequences of that. And the story of contemporary history, and how the Gospel will shape our world.

So if, with Lent, another episode begins, how will this story unfold for us?

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## Reflection

Reflect on the story of the temptation of Jesus in this Sunday’s Gospel and imagine yourself in Jesus’ place. Ask yourself what would happen if Jesus gave an answer other than the one that the Gospel presents.

## Action

After you have identified the drama of Jesus, identify the drama in your own life. Choose a story from your life that reveals your relationship with God and with Christ. If you have time, try to write it out. What insights come to you when you read it?

## Prayer

LORD, YOU HAVE PROBED ME, YOU KNOW ME. YOU KNOW WHEN I SIT AND STAND; YOU UNDERSTAND MY THOUGHTS FROM AFAR. MY TRAVELS AND MY REST YOU MARK; WITH ALL MY WAYS YOU ARE FAMILIAR.

(PSALM 139:1-3)

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