

"Why should I go to Mass? I never get anything out of it." That's a complaint we expect from teenagers. We expect it from teenagers not because they get less out of Mass than adults do, but because they are frequently more honest than adults about spiritual matters.

\* but it could come from anyone.

The question "Why should I go to Mass?" frustrates believers. How do we put into words the faith in our hearts? Our feelings for the Church are usually knit together with who we are. If we unravel our faith to people, it seems paltry; if we leave it bound inside us, it remains obscure to people we love.

\* How do we answer that?

I believe the reason most people go to Mass is that once upon a time we experienced the beauty of prayer. Once upon a time we came face to face with God. We experienced something new--something awesome, or something frightening. We reached out to God. And we felt God looking at us and holding us in love. That experience may have been the someone's death, someone's birth, or someone's love. But through it, we prayed, we saw God, and we hungered for more. Once upon a time we learned how much God loves us, and now week after week we come seeking love again.

As a jogger, I can tell you that going downhill is easier than going uphill. But I'll wager that for Peter, James, and John, coming down the mountain after the Transfiguration was much harder than going up. Upon that mountain they experienced something new, something awesome, something frightening. They saw the glory of Jesus. They prayed. They realized how much God loved them. And they would always hunger for more.

Most of us wish we could pray better. I hear this even from priests. We love prayer, and like most Christians we wish we could pray better. Most Christians have memories of how prayer can enchant us, and we long to feel its magic again.

Now some folks feel insecure about prayer--like I do about automobiles. I know my car needs gas and oil, and it looks prettier if I wash it once in a while. And that's about all I know. Still, that little bit of knowledge gets me pretty far. Most people know the basics about prayer: it needs time and space in our lives, and it looks prettier if we refresh it once in a while. And that little bit will go a long way. We don't have to be prayer mechanics to be good pray-ers.

If you'd like to make a good Lent this year, ~~you might~~ consider making time for prayer at home. Any simple ritual will do. You might pray before meals, or read from the Bible or pray the rosary at that time. I find it helpful to have a special place for prayer, to light a candle, and to ask God's help before I pray. In a way, this is what Peter, James, and John experienced. Jesus took them to a special place, a mountain. Light shone from Jesus himself, and God's voice instructed the apostles to listen, to listen to Jesus. That's all there is to prayer, and it can so enrich our Lent.

Why do we do it? Why do we go to Mass? Why do we pray? It's like asking "Why do people date?" Infatuation makes us curious, and the possibility of greater and deeper love moves us on. The reason we go is hard to analyze, but it's easy to feel. The ~~feeling~~ <sup>reason</sup> is love, which God once revealed in prayer.