

Formation, Not Just Information

March Reflection by Fr. Paul Portland, SDS

Dear Friend,

The parish where I minister, St. Pius X in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, provides copies of “Little Books” from the Diocese of Saginaw to parishioners for ADVENT/Christmas, Lent, and Eastertime. I was struck by a statement in the selection for December 31: *read the Gospels for FORMATION, not information.*

I had never thought of it that way before, but it makes a lot of sense. If we are reading something for “information,” we want to be “informed,” we want to learn something. So, when I get a new gadget, I read the manual for information, that is, to learn something. It is very much in my head.

The danger of reading the Gospels that way is that we might think we “know” what the scripture passage is about. For example, I have read the story of the annunciation so many times that I could almost recite it by heart. In terms of information, there isn’t much more I can learn. I can breeze through it, without much impact on my life.

When I read for FORMATION, I am not looking to learn information, but rather reflecting on what the passage is challenging me to here and now, at this moment in my life. It is reflecting in silence, giving the Holy Spirit time and space to move my heart so that I can LIVE what I am reading. It is not simply gathering information: it is allowing what I read to FORM me as a disciple of Christ.

As we move through Lent, I invite us to consciously approach the Gospels we read and hear as a FORMATION opportunity, challenging us to grow as disciples of Christ, bringing His love and compassion to those around us. God bless.

Fr. Paul, SDS



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