By Pat Haggerty

This week I did something I don't often do. I looked ahead to Sunday's readings. I know this is a good practice, and one I should adhere to more often. It is a way to be somewhat proactive with our Mass participation. We can reflect on what is to come and be prepared to get new insights on the readings when we attend the Sunday liturgy. In our daily lives, we spend much time in preparation of things: preparing a meal, preparing a shopping list, preparing for a class, preparing the house for upcoming visitors. The list could go on and on. So, why not prepare for Mass?

Just yesterday, my husband was telling me that I am involved in too many things that require preparation. I prepare a weekly music lesson for the nursery school children in my community. I create an agenda for a church meeting I am coordinating. I review the music selections for the liturgy I am cantoring. I spend hours putting together a workshop that I will be presenting. Too much preparation? That depends on your perspective, and that's a conversation I need to continue with my husband.

What I do know is this---anything of value is worth preparing for. We needn't go crazy with our over-commitment and sometimes (as in my case right now) we need to re-prioritize. We need to assess what should take up our time. However, I do know that preparing our minds and hearts to be open to the beauty of the liturgy is a worthwhile endeavor. Preparing our hearts to be receptive to the Word of God is not only a good thing, but it is a necessary thing.

In looking at the gospel for the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, we find in Mark's passages that the disciples are once again arguing about greatness. They are traveling with Jesus to Capernaum. Jesus is trying to teach them, and all they can think about is who is the greatest among them. Jesus, once again, uses the presence of a child to focus the disciples on what is really important. He tells them: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."(Mark 9:37)

Let's each take some time to reflect on the passage. Whether we are around children or not, we can all appreciate the significance of childlike simplicity. We can all learn from this and ponder how we each accept God into our lives. Think about this and prepare!