

GABRIEL'S QUEST

Better Later Than Never

Lesson Link: God creates us with the ability to choose between right and wrong. We can make the choice to be a person of holy character (to be the person God wants us to be).

One day at recess, Gabriel saw something where the sidewalk met the grass. He knelt to look. It was a five-dollar bill. *Five dollars!* he thought as he picked it up. He glanced around to see if anyone had dropped the bill. The kids were busy doing other things.

Max, his classmate, was standing at the door. He gave Gabriel a curious look. Gabriel quickly shoved the bill into his pocket. *I'll hand it to Sister Teresa when I go back to class*, he decided.

Gabriel's mind kept going back to the five-dollar bill in his pocket. He thought of all the different things he could buy with five dollars. Candy or a toy or maybe a couple of comic books he liked.

By the time he reached the classroom, he didn't want to give the bill to Sister Teresa. *I'll give it to her later*, he thought. Meanwhile, he kept dreaming of all he could do with five dollars. *Maybe I can take some flowers to Grandma Rosa*, he said to himself.

Time went by. Gabriel felt bad about keeping the money. *The money isn't mine*, he knew. *It belongs to someone else*.

After an afternoon spelling drill, Gabriel went to Sister Teresa's desk. He set the five-dollar bill in front of her. "I found this at recess," he said.

She gazed at him for a moment. "Thank you for handing it in," she said. She put the bill in her desk drawer.

Gabriel sat down again. He felt relieved.

Max suddenly threw his hand in the air. "Sister?"

Sister Teresa asked, "What is it, Max?"



"I lost some money on the playground," he said. He shot a glance at Gabriel.

Gabriel's mouth fell open.

"How much did you lose?" Sister Teresa asked Max.

"Maybe a dollar. Or five. Or ten," he said.

"You don't know how much you lost?" the sister asked. "I want you to think carefully. Was it a one-dollar bill, a five-dollar bill, or a ten-dollar bill?"

"I'm not sure. It had a picture of a president on it," Max said.

Some of the kids laughed.

"Most of our bills have a picture of a president on it," Sister Teresa said. "Was it George Washington or Abraham Lincoln?"

"Abraham Lincoln," Max said. He was clearly guessing.

Gabriel fumed. He was sure that Max saw him pick up the money.

"Are you sure?" Sister Teresa asked.

Before Max could answer, there was a knock at the door. Sister Teresa stood up. Father Cliff was at the door with Lizzy Perry. Lizzy was Gabriel's cousin. She was a sixth grader. Father Cliff whispered to Sister Teresa. Then Sister Teresa nodded and asked Lizzy to come in.

"The sixth-grade class was doing a special project today," Lizzy said. "We hid five-dollar bills around the school to see what students would do if they found them. We watched to count how many students returned the money or kept it for themselves. Someone in this class found one of our bills on the playground."

Sister Teresa gestured to Gabriel. "I'm happy to report that Gabriel found it and handed it in to me." She went to the desk and brought out the five-dollar bill.

Lizzy smiled at Gabriel. "Congratulations, Gabriel," she said. "You did the right thing."

Gabriel felt his cheeks turn red. He remembered how he almost kept the money.

"I'm glad to say that almost all the students in the school turned the money in," said Lizzy. She thanked Sister Teresa and left.

"I'm proud of you," Sister Teresa said to Gabriel. Then she gazed at Max. "Oh, but we still have a problem with your missing money," she said.

Max lowered his head. "Never mind," he mumbled. "I must have left mine at home."

After school, Gabriel talked to Lizzy Perry about what had happened. "I was going to keep that five dollars," he said.

"But you didn't," Lizzy said.

"Does that count?" asked Gabriel.

"That's a good question," Lizzy said. "Does it?"

Questions:

1. **Why did Gabriel hesitate to return the money?** (Answers may vary.)
2. **Why is it sometimes hard to do the right thing?** (Answers may include the wrong thing is attractive.)
3. **Does it count that Gabriel wanted to keep the money but handed it in anyway?** (Answers may vary.)