Probing questions will help readers to ‘rediscover Jesus’

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“Rediscover Jesus: An Invitation,” by Matthew Kelly. Beacon (North Palm Beach, Florida, 2015). 187 pp, $25.

Who can resist an invitation to rediscover Jesus, especially when it is extended by Matthew Kelly, who – by combining the words “dynamic” and “Catholic” – has jolted millions of readers and viewers into igniting, reviving or renewing their Catholic faith?

Readers unfamiliar with Kelly’s work, e.g., “The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic” or “Rediscover Catholicism,” should be aware this invitation requires a commitment. While on the surface “Rediscover Jesus” appears to be an easy read – its chapters are three to eight pages long -– Kelly warns readers: “This book is not about the words on this page. It’s about an encounter. … What you and I need more than anything else is to encounter Jesus.”

He notes that it can be read one of two ways: cover to cover or as “a guide to a 40-day spiritual journey, reading a chapter a day.” To read “Discover” cover to cover is to miss an exploration into your life -– an exploration that requires an intentional expanse of spiritual energy.

If you don’t start with one in hand, you will soon be reaching for a highlighter to mark significant spots in your exploration or bending corners of pages you’ll want to reread. And you will reread them because these chapters need to be digested. Each ends with a point to ponder, Scripture verse to live, question to consider and prayer.

These questions are not answered with a simple nod and an “Oh yeah, I get that.” They probe:

– How seriously do you take Jesus' invitation to forgive?

– What's preventing you from making yourself available to God?

– What will be the hardest thing about letting God transform you and your life?

– What is one practical example of how God is inviting you to let go of your way and open yourself to his way?

– Does getting what you want bring you lasting happiness?

Those aren't the only questions; the text includes many more. In the chapter titled "Jesus on Lifestyle," he asks, "Do you have a healthy relationship with money?" In another titled "Complete Joy," he asks a series of questions, none of them simple to answer.

Following the questions, readers will welcome the opportunity to reflect and pray. It might be several minutes, even hours or, in some cases, days before they move on to the next chapter because Kelly has poked their hearts, maybe given them an opportunity to go where they spiritually haven't been.

Heart is the key in "Rediscover Jesus." He doesn't preach; he doesn't bludgeon. Rather, with a pastoral tone, Kelly speaks to readers' hearts, guiding them in that journey, that rediscovery.

Those unfamiliar with Kelly's work will not be disappointed with "Rediscover" as their introduction. They will appreciate wading into his message without fear of being overwhelmed. Those who know his material will find more of the enthusiasm he demonstrates for embracing the faith, and in deepening one's relationship with Jesus.

Read alone or as part of a parish, small-group discussion series, "Rediscover" provides the encounter Kelly promises, and the spiritual nourishment seekers need for the faith journey.

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