

Experiencing Discipleship

A program in collaboration with the Spiritual Growth Committee

Spiritual Growth Committee

Session 1

Discipleship and the faith journey

John 4:13-14 “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst”

Quick response question

When you hear the word disciple, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

- The Summons

The Summons by John Bell

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known?

Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,

And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

- https://youtu.be/VFXAmB_Iq7k?feature=shared

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around
Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when I but call your name!

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Why you are here

Maybe no one told you this before...

Because you were called by the Holy Spirit and you answered that call

- John 15:16 “It was not you who chose me but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you”
- We are called by the Holy Spirit to come together to celebrate mass each week and we answer the call even knowing we all have a choice each week whether to attend mass
- By coming here today we similarly answer the call of the Holy Spirit

Baptism as entrance into discipleship

Baptism is the first profession of faith (Anointed for Mission)

- Made “..in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
- Baptism has been minimized to the sacrament that guarantees eternal life (equated with individual insurance) when in fact baptism means discipleship and the mission of being an example that draws others to belief in Christ and hope for the dawning of God’s reign (communal)
 - Commissions the baptized to live forever as a member of Christ’s body sharing in his mission as “Priest, Prophet and King”
 - It is impossible to celebrate the sacrament of Baptism privately just like it is impossible to live out a full Christian life privately (monasticism)
- Baptism is the doorway to a life in Christ, not a commodity that is easily obtained, that takes all Christians on a journey toward salvation with God

Quick response question

What are some behaviors of disciples?

Behaviors of a disciple/follower

Continuous growth vs. relativism and being “good enough”

Continuous process of self improvement that starts simply

In 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Paul addresses Timothy as a "man of God," urging him to avoid certain behaviors and instead pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness.

To love God above all else and to love others as we love ourselves, Matthew 22:37-40

Definitions and where this program is positioned

Personal and communal role of disciples

- Disciples and discipleship
 - Someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus
 - Disciple making – entering into relationships to help people trust and follow Jesus, which includes the whole process from conversion through maturation and multiplication (faith journey)
- Catechism, catechesis, catechumen and catechist
 - Teaching the principles of Christian religion (the Creed; the Sacred Liturgy and Sacraments; the Christian way of life, Ten Commandments; and Christian prayer)
- Evangelism and evangelist
 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20)

Fan versus Follower

Sermon of Deacon Jay

- Fans of Jesus come in many varieties, ranging from fan to disciple.
- Fans recognize something about Jesus, they believe in Him and affirm Him. But there is also an expectation of return, of gifts. Fans are there for Jesus because of what they expect to get from Him. They want more of the loaves and fishes, not more of Jesus
- Fans keep Jesus at arm's length until they need Him. They find it difficult to carry their cross. They let their possessions own them instead of renouncing them.
- Fans do not change their lives to follow Jesus, they adapt their following of Jesus to fit their present life. They fit Jesus in.

A follower is a disciple

Sermon of Deacon Jay

- A follower is a disciple. They put Jesus first and in the center of their lives. They are disciplined in their love of Jesus.
- The word discipline comes from disciple. It means to follow. Disciples take to heart the words of Jesus.
- Disciples are better prepared to follow Jesus, to imitate Him, to carry their own cross.
- Recognizing the desire to follow Jesus as disciples (and not as fans) is an important part of our faith journey. Discipline turns fans into disciples.

Pope Francis and Missionary Disciples

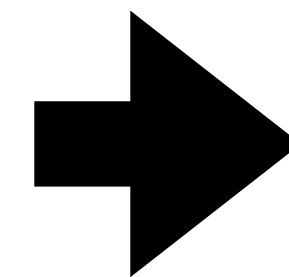
In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19)....The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples". (Evangelii Gaudium, 119)

A disciple of today can be both a follower and leader

Missionary disciples in the spirit of what Pope Francis taught

A disciple is a follower, a student of a mentor, teacher, or other figure

But also an example for others that draws people in



Quick response question

- Jesus used miracles to draw people in, so what is our “miracle power”?

<https://youtu.be/UQxol2AKsZU?si=AxxfFMwROZ3dvMk5>

- https://youtu.be/3tajJ9XxHK4?si=__yBiIJdyVXBOfdU Miracle power we the kingdom
- <https://youtu.be/1LxSzZUlp6I?si=7nHPwgLJ1XOHiAny> Acoustic version

This is for the lost and lonely
 For the broken and afraid
 This is for those who are hurting
 Hoping help is on the way
 In these battles of addiction
 When fear is chasing after me
 Whatever trouble I am facing
 I will lift my hands and sing

I believe in miracle power
 In a wonder working God
 I am filled with the Holy Spirit
 Working wonders in my heart
 I belong to a loving Father
 I'm a friend of Christ His Son
 When it feels like I won't make it
 I call on Jesus

Sometimes it's so hard being human
 So much struggle so much pain (yes,
 there is)
 When I start singing hallelujah
 I say goodbye to every chain (oh)

believe in miracle power
 In a wonder working God
 I am filled with the Holy Spirit
 Working wonders in my heart
 I belong to a loving Father
 I'm a friend of Christ His Son
 When it feels like I won't make it
 I call on Jesus, yeah
 There is no other name than Jesus

I may not know
 What a day may bring
 But I know
 Who brings the day

On the darkest night
 When I cannot see
 Still my soul will say
 I may not know
 What a day may bring
 But I know
 Who brings the day
 On the darkest night
 When I cannot see
 Still my soul will say
 My soul will say

I believe in miracle power
 In a wonder working God
 I am filled with the Holy Spirit
 Working wonders in my heart
 I belong to a loving Father
 I'm a friend of Christ His Son
 When it feels like I won't make it
 I call on Jesus
 Oh, there's miracle power
 When I call on Jesus

The faith journey as disciples

- A process of learning, following, and growing in one's faith to live a life of Christ
- When discipleship is rooted in living out the Gospel, it moves beyond just head knowledge—it becomes life-changing

A simple way to think of discipleship is the grace-driven journey of growing to reflect Jesus in our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Every follower of Jesus is on the way to becoming more like Christ. Think of a line that is drawn from left to right. On the left side of the line you have the starting point. The far right side represents the end point of our discipleship (the day we see Jesus face to face). We're all in the growth process, and on any given day there will be several discipleship moments where you have the opportunity to help move yourself or someone else just a little bit more to the right.

Personal discipleship

(FOCUS program)

- Actions
 - Pursue a life of daily discovery (Holy Spirit) and share it
 - Build on your faith and example through prayer (personal and communal)
 - Lead others by the way we live
 - Christ did not create a name for himself seeking fame, but instead inspired others through acts of humility, charity, courage and love
 - Important that we are consistent in all aspects of our lives - we can't give what we don't have (moral authority)

Quick response question

- What is the upside to living the life of disciples and practicing discipleship?

Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Moral authority and leading others by the way we live

She was born into a middle-class home in the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the 20th century. She eventually moved to one of the poorest parts of the world and worked for decades in anonymity, caring for the destitute and tirelessly doing menial tasks that no one else was willing to do. But slowly, news about her work started to spread. Women from other countries began to join her, and reporters started observing her life and writing about her amazing witness. Her work expanded to other countries, and people from around the world wanted to know more about her. In time, she became one of the most influential women of the 20th century.

In 1979, she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Upon accepting the award, she spoke to the crowd about the demands of real love, how God was the true source of peace and how abortion was the greatest destroyer of peace today. Everyone cheered, even though the crowd had many people in it who did not hold these Christian ideals. In 1982, she gave the commencement address at Harvard. She received a standing ovation for a speech in which she told young people to embrace chastity and the dignity of all life.

In 1985, the United Nations honored her at its 40th anniversary celebration, and she spoke before the most powerful leaders in the world. In her speech, she told the crowd that they were children of God and that they needed to pray because they couldn't give what they didn't have. More applause followed — the United Nations was praising a religious message!

General Perez de Cuellar, Secretary of the United Nations at the time, said this when introducing her: “This is a hall of words. A few days ago we had, in this rostrum, the most powerful men in the world. Now we have the privilege to have the most powerful woman in the world. I don't think I need to present her. She doesn't need words. She does need deeds ... She is the United Nations. She is peace in this world.” (1)

Who is this woman whom the United Nations called “the most powerful woman in the world”? And what made her so powerful? Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu is now known as St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She became one of the most influential leaders in the world — not because of wealth, or fame, or any title or position she held, but because of the remarkable way she lived her life.

Disciples are fruitful

The product of faith and effective prayer in Jesus' name

Jesus says that being fruitful proves that you are his disciple. "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so become my disciples" -John 15:8

"Bearing much fruit" means everything that is the product of effective prayer in Jesus' name.

To start it means to love one another as Jesus loved us John 15:12 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law" Galatians 5:22-23

- <https://youtu.be/FSBZryBPSzA?si=2w1D6mLfNsH42wTm> I am They gratitude
- <https://youtu.be/sYi5rPOG-ng?si=Mzz5omMoPcCsfG45> Zahriya Zachary
- https://youtu.be/dQdfs5S6jyA?si=jn5ex_2haUQUhrho Gratitude Brandon Lake

All my words fall short
 I got nothing new
 How could I express
 All my gratitude
 I could sing these songs
 As I often do
 But every song must end
 And You never do
 So I throw up my hands
 And praise You again and again
 'Cause all that I have is a
 hallelujah
 Hallelujah
 I know it's not much
 But I've nothing else fit for a King
 Except for a heart singing
 hallelujah
 Hallelujah

I've got one response
 I've got just one move
 With my arm stretched wide
 I will worship You
 So I throw up my hands
 And praise You again and again
 'Cause all that I have is a hallelujah
 Hallelujah
 I know it's not much
 But I've nothing else fit for a King
 Except for a heart singing hallelujah
 Hallelujah

So come on, my soul
 Don't you get shy on me
 Lift up your song
 'Cause you've got a lion inside of those lungs
 Get up and praise the Lord

Come on, my soul
 Don't you get shy on me
 Lift up your song
 'Cause you've got a lion inside of those lungs
 Get up and praise the Lord
 Come on, my soul
 Don't you get shy on me
 Lift up your song
 'Cause you've got a lion inside of those lungs
 Get up and praise the Lord
 So I throw up my hands
 Praise You again and again
 'Cause all that I have is a hallelujah
 Hallelujah
 I know it's not much
 But I've nothing else fit for a King
 Except for a heart singing hallelujah
 Hallelujah

Awakening ourselves strengthens our parishes

Maintenance versus mission

- FROM: A parish that offers mass, sacraments, religious education (and perhaps Catholic school) primarily to teach information to kids and dispense sacraments [maintenance]
- TO: First and foremost, providing an opportunity for families to engage the community throughout the process of mass, sacraments and teaching such that we encounter the living Christ in our lives as the God who loves, heals, and saves them [mission]
 - Child first policies fail because with each generation, home reinforcement of practices is less and less valued
 - CARA data between 2000-2012 found 40% decrease in church weddings, 50% decrease in adult baptisms, 30% decrease in infant baptisms, 15% decrease in first communions

Recap

Key points to remember

- We are called by the Holy Spirit through daily discovery and choose to answer the call
 - It is not Catholic guilt that guides us
- Baptism is not insurance for eternal life but a call to discipleship (priest [sacrifice], prophet [challenge others] and king [leading by example]) and entrance into a community of believers
 - Growth/maturation is supported by the grace of the Holy Spirit
- The Church is the body of Christ and we should strive not to stand out as individuals but rather together as the body of Christ
 - Personal relationship with God (seeing, trusting) is critical but so is our role in (developing) the community of faith that supports us and others in our faith journeys and allows us to meet people where they are
 - Don't remove your light from the world, let it shine for others to see