

## *Living as Missionary Disciples of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Week of Lent Retreat Theme: Discipleship**

In preparing ourselves for our Lenten Retreat, we encourage you to take a few moments throughout this week and then reflect on what resonates most with you.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer Pastor and theologian** wrote: Discipleship means “follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible program for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after ...The old life is left behind, and completely surrendered. The disciple is dragged out of his relative security into a life of absolute insecurity ... out of the realm of the finite ... into the realm of infinite possibilities ... It is nothing else than bondage to Jesus Christ alone, completely breaking through every program, every ideal, every set of laws. No other significance is possible, since Jesus is the only significance. Besides Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Question for reflection:** For me to live as a disciple of Christ in the 21st century, what am I being prompted by the Spirit to leave behind, to surrender in order that Jesus’ significance has primacy in my life?

**Henri Nouwen, Catholic Priest and author:** "Discipline is the other side of discipleship. Discipleship without discipline is like waiting to run in the marathon without ever practicing. Discipline without discipleship is like always practicing for the marathon but never participating. It is important, however, to realize that discipline in the spiritual life is not the same as discipline in sports. Discipline in sports is the concentrated effort to master the body so that it can obey the mind better. Discipline in the spiritual life is ... the creation of boundaries that keep time and space open for God. Solitude requires discipline, worship requires discipline, caring for others requires discipline. They all ask us to set apart a time and a place where God's gracious presence can be acknowledged and responded to." – Henri Nouwen

**Question for reflection:** In a life filled with busyness, what adjustment am I being invited to make in my life so that the discipline of silence, prayer and solitude may foster within me a renewed readiness to be a missionary disciple of Christ with all the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century?

**Joan Chittister O.S.B. A Benedictine Sister** writes: "Christian discipleship is the commitment to live a gospel life, a marginal life in this place, at this time whatever the cost... Christian discipleship is about living in this world the way that Jesus the Christ lived in his - touching lepers, raising donkeys from ditches on Sabbath days, questioning the unquestionable and - consorting with women! Discipleship implies a commitment to leave nets and homes, positions and securities, lordship and legalities to be now - in our own world - what the Christ was for his. The true disciple hears the poor, and ministers to anyone, to everyone." – Joan Chittister O.S.B.

**Questions for reflection:** If Jesus is calling me to be his disciple whatever the cost, is there anything that might be holding me back? In other words, is my answer to the call of discipleship, “yes, but not yet”; if so, why the not yet?

## **Missionary Discipleship: What is it?**

### **Thoughts on becoming a disciple of Christ**

When we read the Gospels, we often see a theme of transition. This transition is presented in various forms but always connotes a decisive movement from one way of life into another. Some of these are described as moving from darkness to light, from being lost to being found, from death to life, from being called to leaving the old and following the new.

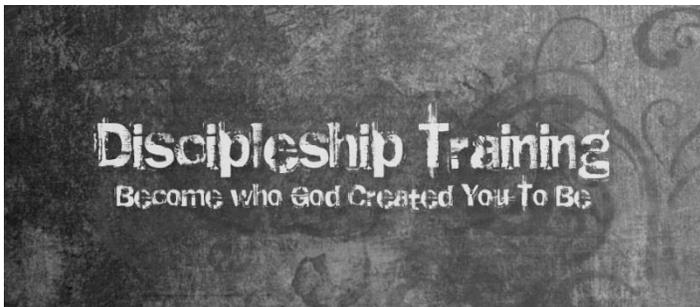
Jesus called the apostles to follow him and they left all behind. In Lk 14:26-32 Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple... So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

In this we see a detachment from, or death of one's current way of life to embrace a new life found in Christ. It is strikingly similar to marriage as described in Genesis 2:24: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." We have the moving away from one life into a totally new life where the two become one. As members of the Body of Christ we are the Bride of Christ and must leave our old way of life behind us to embrace the new life in union with God.

Is this not the cry of our hearts? If we retreat from the busyness of our lives and allow ourselves to be quiet and reflective; introspective; willing to take an honest look at our soul; don't we see our restlessness of heart? Don't we see the dissatisfaction and unhappiness of a life lived apart from God? Don't we see our unworthiness to be one with God and yet see hope in His abundant mercy; His relentless pursuit of us even to the point of uniting with our humanity and dying for us that we might become children of God. It is this understanding that one receives which produces disciples; convincing one to trust the Father; to cling to the Son, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and to live a life in the Spirit.

In this loving union with God, one finds true purpose in life which is caught up in becoming like Christ. As one is transformed, the mission of the Church deepens within the disciple who disciplines his or her life to follow and obey Jesus. Loving God and neighbor grows as the desire of the heart, and the disciple looks for opportunities to share the Gospel with those encountered that they might also receive new life which is their ultimate good. For "... how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him (Rom 10:14)?" So, the missionary disciple must be ready to share as Peter says, "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15)"

A missionary disciple is one who radiates Christ to the world by centering his or her life on loving God and loving neighbor.



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