



Pastor's Column

Evangelization Begins with Discipleship

November 26, 2017

In the homily this Sunday, the “Parochial Year For Evangelization” was officially begun, starting today with Christ the King 2017 and concluding one year from now on Christ the King 2018. As a parish, we will be presented with many insights and much encouragement with regard to evangelization, all of it intended to help us understand and appreciate *how* and *why* to evangelize, and also *when* and *to whom* to evangelize.

However, before we can even begin to *evangelize*, we ourselves must first allow ourselves to *be* evangelized – that is, to be made into active, intentional, whole-hearted discipleships of Jesus Christ.

And so, evangelization begins with discipleship. And I propose that there are nine stages of discipleship formation, each of which we will explore more thoroughly in the weeks ahead in these Pastor’s Columns.

First stage: recognizing that the prerequisite for discipleship is faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Faith means (among other things) surrendering oneself entirely to Jesus Christ – repenting, being converted, and walking in His way (for He *is* the Way).

Second: discipleship begins with vocation – God’s “calling” (“vocation” is derived from the Latin *vocare*, which means “to call”). Each of us has a God-given vocation in life, to which we are to respond if we are to do our part in building up the Kingdom of Heaven here on Earth for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. For most of us, that vocation is Holy Matrimony; for others, it is Holy Orders, religious life, or consecrated single life.

Third: prayer. We must learn from Jesus how to pray, always keeping in mind that the Holy Spirit must be integral to our lives of prayer if our prayer is to be truly effective and bear fruit.

Fourth: the Sermon on the Mount. We do well to read, study, and pray with Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, for as Saint Augustine teaches us, the Sermon on the Mount is the charter of the Lord’s school of Christian living and discipleship.

Fifth: humbly to recognize and accept that we are all sinners, and Jesus came to call not the righteous but the sinners to repentance, for those who are healthy have no need of a doctor, but the sick do. What is sin? How does Jesus come to take away the sins of the world?

Sixth: devotion to the Cross of Christ. The Altar of the Sacrifice, the Key to the Kingdom, the Throne of the Lord: thus is the Cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The Cross frightens us maybe; and yet there can be no path to the Resurrection that does not lead by way of the Cross; therefore, no discipleship is possible that tries to get around the Cross.

Seventh: we the students must eventually become the teachers; the disciples must become the apostles, sent forth by the Lord to evangelize and proclaim the Gospel.

Eight: we embrace the blessed truth that Jesus does not send us forth alone; He sends the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to be with us always as our Counselor and Teacher; only in the power of the Holy Spirit is proclamation possible.

Ninth: our final aim and end is the greater glory of God and the salvation of all souls. If we do not have that clearly in mind, then all of our efforts are futile and useless. Eternal life is the goal, the reward for the faithful steward, the faithful disciple. May it be that we ourselves will be blessed to receive this reward at the end of days and so be received into halls of heavenly realms.

~ Fr. Lewis