



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

February 18, 2018 ~ First Sunday of Lent

Nine Stages of Discipleship Formation

This week's Pastor's Column is largely a revisit of what was published in the parish bulletin for Christ the King back in November. It is revisited here by way of reminder of where we have been thus far in our Parochial Year For Evangelization and also to reintroduce some certain theme of discipleship and evangelization that will be unpacked in greater detail through the seasons of Lent and Easter.

And so, as the Parochial Year For Evangelization continues, we are presented with many insights and much encouragement with regard to discipleship and evangelization, all of which is intended to help us understand and appreciate how and why to be discipled ourselves in order to evangelize others – when and to whom to evangelize. That is, in short: evangelization begins with discipleship; and there are nine stages of discipleship formation, each of which will be explored in the weeks ahead

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.

Eighth: 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