



Pastor's Column

St. Peter Catholic Church

May 20, 2018, Pentecost Sunday

The Ninth Stage of Discipleship Formation

We continue (and now conclude) our present study of the stages of discipleship formation. Two Sundays ago, we reflected upon the eighth stage: acknowledging and trusting in the role of the Holy Spirit in our holy endeavors. This also was a central theme of the homily preached last Sunday.

And now, the ninth and final stage of discipleship formation: keeping always in mind our final destination, our final aim and end which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of 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 and disciple of Jesus Christ.

But you know what, all of this has had us placing huge emphasis on discipleship. But do we wonder if discipleship is even worthwhile at all? Is it worth it for us to go through the hassle of the Lord's school of life? If it concerns us or scandalizes us that we would ever even dare to think such questions, then we can rest assured that the Lord Himself never rejects such questions; rather, He is most receptive and encouraging of them because where we are weak, He makes us stronger; where we have questions, He provides the answer (and, indeed, *is* the Answer).

A faithful, joyful disciple can, in fact, ask questions. Mother Mary did, and she is the Lord's best and most perfect disciple. "How can this be?" she asked, referring to the virgin-birth of Jesus Christ. (Lk 1:34) And so, we *can* ask God questions and still be a good disciple...*if*, as a disciple, we strive truly to be humble and fully to be open to hearing the answer! Therefore, it is not forbidden to ask: what is the reward for discipleship? Jesus is open to questions of reward; He even speaks openly of rewards (and of risk *versus* rewards – a cost-benefit analysis, if you will...see Lk 14:26-33)

The reward for discipleship? The reward for promoting the greater glory of God, working for the salvation of all souls? It is not a treasure, it is not even paradise; it is a Person. Jesus is the reward; He is the fulfillment, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

The reward of discipleship is eternal life, and "this is eternal life, that [we] should know...the only true God, and the One Whom [God] has sent, Jesus Christ." (Jn 17:3)

We must always keep this final destination always clearly in mind: our final aim and end for all that we strive to say and do in this mortal, earthly life is the greater glory of God and the salvation of all souls. Our faithful, joyful commitment this two-fold task is the holy endeavor of the steward and disciple of Jesus Christ, whose reward is eternal life with Him and nothing less than that.

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.