

January 17, 2021
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
1 Sam 3:3b-10, 19
1 Cor 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Jn 1:35-42

So you wanna be a disciple of Jesus Christ? You wanna be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Do you wanna be a disciple of Jesus Christ? You sure?

Well, you're in good company. In today's gospel Andrew, John, and Peter all say "yes" to discipleship. They would be followed by 9 more. These 12 would comprise Jesus' inner circle and become known as The Apostles, or simply The Twelve. Their destinies would be forever changed.

But there's one key difference between them and us. They had no clue what they were getting themselves into. We, on the other hand, know—or should know—what we're getting ourselves into. After all, we have the example of not only the Apostles, but billions of Christians since. We have the lives of the saints as models of discipleship. We have lived discipleship experiences through our parents and grandparents.

But what, exactly, are we getting ourselves into? What is this discipleship?

The dictionary defines a disciple as a follower of teachings or a religion or a person. So, in our case, as followers of Jesus and His teachings, **what is it that we are following? Do we understand what Jesus and His teachings are asking us to do?**

Last weekend Bishop Larry Silva ordained 8 men in the Diocese of Honolulu as permanent deacons, 4 on Friday and 4 on Saturday. Bishop Larry began his Friday homily by shouting: "Go! Go! Go!". At first, I thought I had successfully recruited Bishop to be a Notre Dame football fan. Alas, not.

The point of Bishop's exhortation was that true discipleship is not to be confined inside the walls of this or any other church. Rather, we come inside here to get nourished by prayer and Scripture and Eucharist and by one another, so that we have the strength we need for discipleship, because it is only the strong and well-nourished who can discharge the duties of discipleship and bear its rigors. For disciples are called to go out into the world like Jesus. We are called to take Jesus' love to schools, workplaces, homes, communities, highways, and by-ways—indeed to every corner of the world. We are called to visit the sick; to visit the imprisoned; to listen to the troubled who need a sympathetic ear; to love the unlovable.

Bishop Larry continued his discourse on the rigors of discipleship in his homily during the Saturday ordinations. He called disciples "weightlifters" because disciples are called to help

carry the weight of the world, even in the face of rejection—to carry the weight of the world by raising heavy hearts and earth-bound minds; by alleviating despair; by dispensing God’s love.

Most of us probably don’t remember our baptism, but when we were baptized, we were anointed priests, prophets, and kings. As priests we’re consecrated to a life of prayer. So as disciples we’re called to pray every day. Of course, what we’re doing now, the Mass, is the highest form of prayer. But there are many ways to pray: We can recite prayers like the Our Father and the Hail Mary; we can listen for the voice of God as we go about our daily routines; we can

communicate with God—converse with Him--during the day; we can even offer our lives as prayers to God.

When we were anointed prophets we were committed to a life of evangelization—to keep our ears and hearts open to hear and internalize the Word of God, and then spread that Word by what we say and by how we live our lives.

When we were anointed kings we were committed to a life of service because, like Jesus, we were anointed servant kings: “I came not to be served, but to serve”. We are asked to go out and do the heavy lifting of service: Service to our families; to our parish; to our friends and neighbors; to our schools and workplaces; to our community; indeed, to the whole world. We are asked to serve with joyful hearts even though service can at times be dirty and dingy and disgusting—even unwanted and rejected.

Still wanna be a disciple? It’s hard work. How can anyone possibly do all this? How can anyone possibly meet the job description of a disciple?

The short answer is we cannot. Think about it. Even the Apostles failed at times. Peter denied Jesus three times. Thomas doubted. All but John deserted Jesus in His hour of greatest need.

And **what was Jesus’ response to these failures?** His first words after He rose from the dead to the men who had deserted Him were: “Peace be with you”. He tenderly invited Thomas to touch His wounds and leave behind his disbelief. Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to express his love three times to bury once and for all Peter’s three denials so that Peter could forgive himself. It’s often said that one cannot succeed without first experiencing failure.

The point is this: Don’t be too hard on yourself because Jesus will not be hard on you. Don’t be afraid to fail; to fall short. All Jesus asks is that we try; that we give it our best shot. And the more we try, the more we will discover that there is joy in discipleship, because bringing joy to others can do nothing but bring joy into our own lives. Jesus is inviting us to journey with Him just as He invited Peter, Andrew, and John. He is inviting us to enjoy the challenges of discipleship. He is inviting us to a lifestyle of bringing joy to others, a joy that will come back also to us. And He is inviting us to walk with one another so we never have to go it alone; so we

can encourage one another and share joy with one another. And He is inviting us into the same shared experiences and loving relationship that He had with His Apostles.

So just say “yes” to discipleship and leave the rest to God. In the words of Samuel: “Speak, for Your servant is listening”. Through prayer and evangelization and service, allow the Lord to form you into men and women for others. And then enjoy the ride because Jesus loves you every bit as intimately as He loved His Apostles.